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## Second Committee

**Summary record of the 21st meeting**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 26 October 2006, at 10 a.m.

*Chairperson*: Ms. Intelmann. . . . . (Estonia)
*later*: Ms. Gomes (Rapporteur). . . . . (Portugal)
*later*: Mr. Fonseca (Vice-Chairperson) . . . . . (Brazil)
*later*: Ms. Intelmann (Chairperson) . . . . . (Estonia)

## Contents

Agenda item 54: Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

Agenda item 53: Sustainable development (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (*continued*)

(b) Follow-up to and implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (*continued*)

(c) International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (*continued*)

(d) Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind (*continued*)

(f) Convention on Biological Diversity (*continued*)

(g) Report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on its ninth special session (*continued*)

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.20 a.m.*

**Agenda item 54: Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)** (A/61/262 and 363)

1. **Ms. Tibaijuka** (Executive Director, United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) (A/61/262) and the report of the Secretary-General on coordinated implementation of the Habitat Agenda (E/2006/71), expressed strong concern at recent findings that revealed the degree of deprivation associated with urban poverty: the *State of the World's Cities* report for 2006-2007 showed that the living conditions of slum-dwellers in terms of access to water and sanitation, education and health care were often worse than those of their rural counterparts. Evidence showed that those living in slums — more than 1 billion people — suffered from levels of malnutrition similar to or worse than those found in rural areas. HIV prevalence was substantially higher for slum-dwellers than for the rest of the urban population, and they were the most vulnerable to waterborne and other communicable diseases. Consequently, life expectancy was the lowest among the urban poor, despite their proximity to markets, hospitals, water supply and sewerage systems.

2. That urgent situation was compounded by rapid urbanization and the urbanization of poverty, for the *State of the World's Cities* report also showed that the rate of slum growth was almost equal to the rate of urban growth. Consequently, most people born in, or migrating to, cities would be living in life-threatening conditions on an unprecedented scale. To continue to ignore the plight of slum-dwellers would be to run the risk of not achieving the Millennium Development Goals for a significant portion of the poor, and the risk of massive social exclusion with all its consequences for peace and security.

3. There were, however, grounds for guarded optimism. There had been unparalleled attendance at the third session of the World Urban Forum, held in Vancouver in June 2006, on the theme "Our Future: Sustainable Cities — Turning Ideas into Action", with 10,000 people from over 100 countries representing all spheres of government and civil society unanimous in their call for action. The Forum had underscored the need to mainstream the urban poverty agenda within both the development and environmental agendas; the need for participatory and inclusive urban governance; and the need for the strengthened role of local authorities to meet the housing and basic service needs of all women, men and children. It had also called for more resources to be mobilized and devoted to affordable housing to meet slum challenges.

4. Another cause for guarded optimism was the promulgation by the Secretary-General of the special annex for the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation to the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations, which had come into force on 1 August 2006, and would further strengthen UN-Habitat and its ability to fulfil a catalytic role in attaining the slum upgrading and water and sanitation targets of the United Nations Millennium Declaration. The United Nations had placed the focus of the Human Settlements Foundation's work thus far on policy guidance, technical assistance, global monitoring and advocacy, but the long-awaited revised rules and regulations would provide a key determinant to the effectiveness of its action: the ability to invest, and provide support in the key area of affordable housing finance. Consequently, the United Nations could begin to respond to paragraph 56 (m) of the 2005 World Summit Outcome and its call for urgent action and measures to prevent the future growth of slums.

5. Meeting the target of achieving by 2020 a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum-dwellers, and preventing future growth of slums would require an annual investment estimated at $20 billion until 2020. International assistance in the area of urban development currently stood at $5 billion. The only way to meet the challenge posed by slums was to mobilize domestic capital for investment in pro-poor housing and urban development. UN-Habitat had been working over the years to coordinate international efforts to support Member States in adopting pro-poor land policies, which were a key determinant for slum upgrading, and was designing and field testing pro-poor housing finance systems under the Slum Upgrading Facility and the cooperation of some commercial banks had been secured.

6. The Human Settlements Programme had also been working closely with international finance institutions to pioneer pro-poor access to basic urban infrastructure and services, particularly in the area of water and sanitation, and had striven to improve the capacity of local authorities to engage in pro-poor participatory planning and management and to empower slum-dwellers by involving them in decisions affecting them. It had actively supported the convening of regional ministerial conferences on housing and urban development to muster the political will for attaining the human-settlements-related goals and targets of the Millennium Declaration.

7. In her view, UN-Habitat was on the verge of meeting most of the necessary pre-conditions for going to scale in housing and urban infrastructure and development. The revised regulations and rules relating to the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation would enable it to provide seed capital and loan guarantees that would reduce the perceived risk of investing domestic capital in pro-poor housing and urban development. They further enabled the United Nations system to leverage its policy and capacity-building efforts, to encourage pre-investment and private-sector engagement. Finally, they empowered the urban poor to realize the process of transforming their hovels into houses — or transforming their homes into tangible and recognizable assets — and to break the vicious cycle of poverty.

8. **Mr. Fonseca** (Brazil) enquired about concrete measures that could be taken to promote synergy and facilitate the work of the Human Settlements Programme in the context of the operational changes being envisaged in the United Nations system.

9. **Ms. Tibaijuka** (Executive Director, United Nations Human Settlements Programme) said that she hoped the reform process under way would look to the future: the future was urban. That meant preparing to solve the challenge of urban poverty. Latin America, Asia and Africa were — or were fast becoming — predominantly urbanized. As part of its work in sustainable urban development, UN-Habitat must place greater emphasis on pro-poor mortgage finance systems — an important issue, given the lack of affordable housing — one which she hoped would be addressed by Member States in the context of the reform process — and on the promulgation of the special annex for the United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation to the Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations.

10. **Mr. González** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) pledged his support for and cooperation with the work of the Human Settlements Programme, particularly in relation to the specific requirements of Latin America. He described a project in his country aimed at the direct involvement of people living in marginalized areas in the management of those areas, particularly in relation to the provision of basic services and other matters affecting their quality of life, which hopefully could dovetail with the work of the Human Settlements Programme.

**Agenda item 53: Sustainable development** (*continued*)

**(a) Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development** (*continued*) (A/61/93, 126 and 258; A/C.2/61/4)

**(b) Follow-up to and implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States** (*continued*) (A/61/72-E/2006/54, A/61/75-E/2006/49 and A/61/76-E/2006/51; A/61/181, 268 and 277)

**(c) International Strategy for Disaster Reduction** (*continued*) (A/61/229 and Corr.1; A/C.2/61/CRP.1)

**(d) Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind** (*continued*) (A/61/225)

**(f) Convention on Biological Diversity** (*continued*) (A/61/225)

**(g) Report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on its ninth special session** (*continued*) (A/61/25 (Supp. No. 25) and 322)

11. **Mr. Lukwiya** (Uganda) expressed concern at the falling water level in Lake Victoria, referring to the United Nations Environment Programme publication *Africa's Lakes: Atlas of Our Changing Environment*. The level of Africa's largest freshwater lake had fallen by approximately 1 m since the early 1990s, as a result of climate change. The lake supported a dense population — one of the world's poorest — of over

30 million people, in addition to providing a lifeline to millions more in Sudan and Egypt through the Nile River. The dire consequences of soil degradation and extensive deforestation in that region provided a serious challenge to the deepening global commitment to sustainable development. As a result of the falling water level, in addition to the serious drought experienced by the Lake Victoria basin countries (Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania), the region was facing an energy crisis, as Uganda depended heavily on hydroelectric power generation and distribution, which had been adversely affected. Coupled with the sharp rise in the world market price of oil, that situation had resulted in energy insecurity, seriously calling into question the sustainability of progress in the implementation of Agenda 21 as an increasing number of people resorted to the use of firewood and other sources of energy.

12. For Uganda, the challenge in the implementation of Agenda 21 was that the natural ecosystem contributed directly to the economy and livelihood of the population, for example in the area of brick and firewood production, crafts, livestock, fisheries and tourism. Natural resource management and environmental protection must therefore become key factors in poverty reduction and economic growth, and a critical balance must be achieved between control and total prohibition in the use of those resources. The environment agenda must be mainstreamed into national development, and environmental degradation, together with the elimination of poverty, must be addressed through global cooperation and partnership. Inclusive, results-oriented and effective environmental policies and regulatory frameworks were necessary.

13. For the least developed countries and small island developing States, climate change had become a greater security threat than terrorism, because those poor countries were suffering the long-term effects of environmental crimes committed elsewhere, which risked eliminating the progress made so far by developing countries in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. With the dwindling global supplies of oil and water, and the accompanying tensions, energy and climate policies would become crucial for global security. The way forward was increased access by the poor to reliable and affordable energy services; the sharing of new technologies for energy efficiency; rapid realization of the Kyoto Protocol objectives; and the strengthening of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

14. **Mr. González** (Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela) said that strengthening sustainable development was foremost among the changes his Government was implementing in line with its commitment to attain internationally agreed goals. Under the Venezuelan Constitution, each generation had a right and a duty to protect and maintain the environment for future generations. His country stressed the need to modify unsustainable production and consumption patterns and supported the principle of States' shared but differentiated responsibility for environmental protection. Accordingly, because they caused more environmental destruction and had more resources, developed countries had a greater responsibility to adopt measures and assist developing countries in that process.

15. In recognition of the importance of energy for development, his Government was promoting a number of energy integration initiatives as part of the Bolivarian Alternative for the Americas (ALBA). Such initiatives were designed to guarantee access to non-renewable energy resources and defend the right of the countries concerned to use such resources.

16. His country had also designed the project "Misión Árbol", which sought to save forests and restore natural areas throughout the country. The goal for the current year was to plant 20 million trees. To that end, $10 million had been earmarked. Countries were responsible for looking after their own forests and should use their national budget to that end. However, that fact should also be recognized and compensated by the international community. The work of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) should be strengthened in order to achieve sustainable management of all types of forests, which should be given priority in the multi-year programme of work for the period 2007-2015.

17. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela honoured its commitment to preserve natural resources and species in line with the provisions of the Convention on Biological Diversity, which was the ideal instrument for promoting the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity beyond areas of national jurisdiction. His Government strongly rejected genetic use restriction technologies (Terminator technology), field tests and commercialization of sterile seed technologies. For that reason, it opposed genetically modified foods and welcomed the agreements reached at the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention regarding the extension of the de

facto moratorium on genetic use restriction technologies.

18. Desertification, meanwhile, was a major problem, primarily because of its effect on food production. In an effort to strengthen South-South cooperation, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela had backed the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, contributing $6 million in the past five years to environmental rehabilitation programmes to countries in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific. It had also supported the establishment of a sustainable development foundation to fight poverty and desertification in various regions. He hoped that the South would stand up to globalization and the single development model and continue to promote a new multipolar international system. Developing countries suffered the most from the environmental degradation caused by savage capitalism, which continued to destroy natural resources and, therefore, the very foundations of human life.

19. The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela supported the development aspirations of small island States, whose capacity to reduce risks and mitigate and respond to the consequences of natural and man-made hazards needed to be strengthened. To that end, it had established the "Simon Bolívar" International Humanitarian Assistance Brigade, which offered national and international disaster prevention and response assistance.

20. The idea that people and nature were quantifiable and tradable goods was deplorable; even water and air had become consumer goods. Nature was being destroyed by such inhumane conduct. He stressed that international agreements must preserve the sovereign right of States to manage their own natural resources and rejected attempts to turn natural resources into market instruments or commodities that could be exchanged for development assistance. He therefore rejected the establishment of a new international body or normative system other than UNEP, on the pretext of protecting natural resources. Such a body would not only create an additional bureaucratic burden, but also constitute yet another instrument that served the interests of developed countries, as it would weaken the position of developing countries by transferring political issues relating to the environment from the General Assembly to technical bodies.

21. Lastly, he reaffirmed the principles enshrined in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Agenda 21 and Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Declaration on Sustainable Development, and the Monterrey Consensus.

22. **Ms. Gómez** (Ecuador) said that various factors, including climate change and poverty, were to blame for the increasing frequency of natural hazards and the increasing vulnerability of the countries affected by them. As such, disaster reduction must be seen as a pillar of sustainable development and an issue requiring urgent attention. Her delegation called for the effective implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action 2005-2015: Building the Resilience of Nations and Communities to Disasters and the strengthening of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction. The proposed Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction was, without doubt, the best way to promote the international cooperation needed to ensure implementation of the Hyogo Framework. In that context, a comprehensive approach was essential in order to strengthen regional disaster response capacity and maximize the impact of activities coordinated with the Strategy.

23. Ecuador was firmly committed to the work of the International Research Centre on the El Niño Phenomenon (CiiFEN), established in early 2003. The Centre had been strengthened institutionally and, owing to the support of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) and the Strategy secretariat, had made progress on developing a training and information strategy covering such issues as early warning, risk management and improved response capacity. The urgent need to support the populations of countries affected by the El Niño phenomenon required greater commitment by the international community to the Centre's activities. Ecuador therefore reiterated its call for the financial support necessary for the Centre to meet its objectives. Her delegation was concerned by the fact that the issue had been addressed only briefly in the Secretary-General's report (A/61/229 and Corr.1). Climate change was the most important global issue at the current time. The international community needed to create the conditions to achieve sustainable economic growth, eradicate poverty and build capacity to respond to the consequences of climate change.

24. **Ms. Coye-Felson** (Belize), speaking on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), expressed support for the statements made on behalf of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS) and the Group

of 77 and China. The Caribbean region had agreed on a legal framework for the protection and development of the marine environment of the wider Caribbean region under the Cartagena Convention and its Protocols. The United Nations, through various General Assembly resolutions, supported the need for such a framework and recognized the importance of an integrated management approach to the Caribbean in the context of sustainable development. Furthermore, by endorsing the Mauritius Strategy, the General Assembly had sanctioned the efforts of small island developing States and development partners to work together to promote the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development. CARICOM appreciated the international community's support in furthering that important objective.

25. The Caribbean Sea Initiative had reached a new stage of implementation with the establishment by the Association of Caribbean States (ACS) of the Follow-Up Commission for the Caribbean Sea Initiative, which, in an effort to develop a better understanding of the concept of "special area in the context of sustainable development", had proposed a definition of the Caribbean Sea as a special area. CARICOM urged the international community to recognize the Caribbean Sea as a special area in the context of sustainable development during the current session, in order to give impetus and legitimacy to the operationalization of the necessary framework for the sustainable use of the Caribbean Sea.

26. Climate change and sea-level rise presented serious and immediate threats to small island developing States and low lying coastal States. CARICOM called on the international community to demonstrate the necessary political will and take concerted and more aggressive action to address the impact of climate change on sustainable development. CARICOM strongly supported the positions of AOSIS and the Group of 77 and China on the urgent need for further international action and cooperation on mitigation and adaptation.

27. At the fourteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, small island developing States had underscored the need to reduce emissions, including through sustainable energy consumption patterns and renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies. CARICOM had established the Caribbean Renewable Energy Development Programme to remove barriers to the use of renewable energy and to foster its development and commercialization. CARICOM once again requested international support for the programme and for the development of incentives and financing mechanisms to promote renewable energy as an integral part of sustainable development. The discussion of those issues during the review session of the Commission on Sustainable Development would doubtless be reflected in the outcome of the policy session of its current implementation cycle.

28. One of the major initiatives of the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre, inaugurated by CARICOM in 2005, had been the Mainstreaming Adaptation to Global Change project, which sought to mainstream climate change adaptation strategies into the sustainable development agendas of small island and low-lying States. The project had recently received a new World Bank grant to support a pilot programme in Dominica, Saint Lucia and Saint Vincent and the Grenadines. CARICOM welcomed the international community's continued support for the Centre, which was becoming a regional centre of excellence in capacity-building, technical assistance and coordination.

29. According to the report of the Secretary-General on implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (A/61/229), the upward trend in disasters was likely to continue. CARICOM underlined the need to recognize disaster reduction as a development objective and a target for development assistance and for improved and rapid humanitarian response, including financing. Accordingly, it echoed the call for a stepped-up response from the international community to the growing and complex problems of disasters and vulnerabilities.

30. CARICOM welcomed the launch of the Central Emergency Response Fund, for which it urged long-term support. It also supported the Secretary-General's recommendations for improved and accelerated implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action coupled with the further strengthening of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and national and local capacities, the realignment of the policies of international financial institutions, and more sustained investment in risk reduction, climate monitoring and associated hazard risk management.

31. CARICOM had continuously pointed to the increasing evidence of the impact of warmer climates on the frequency and intensity of weather events. As an area prone to natural disasters, CARICOM would appreciate further information on international efforts

to promote the convergence of disaster reduction and climate change adaptation.

32. **Mr. Soborun** (Mauritius), speaking on behalf of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), which fully supported the statement by South Africa on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that SADC attached great importance to sustainable development and had taken specific measures to achieve it. Its Regional Indicative Strategic Development Plan, for example, set out a common vision for a southern Africa actively engaged in economic cooperation and regional integration and in building a more prosperous future for the whole region. The Southern African Power Pool, meanwhile, aimed to facilitate energy pooling and develop a regional electricity infrastructure. However, despite its best efforts, many in the region still lacked access to energy sources. Weak infrastructure and volatile international markets had impacted negatively on efforts to secure access to reliable energy sources, while price instability caused inflationary pressures that jeopardized growth sustainability. Noting that the region still required international support in order to meet the goals set out in Agenda 21 and the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, he encouraged the donor community and the financial institutions to fulfil their commitments under the Monterrey Consensus. In that connection, he welcomed the recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (A/61/258), in particular the recommendation contained in paragraph 57 (a).

33. Taking note of the Secretary-General's report on the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (A/61/277), he drew attention to the symbiotic relationship between the Millennium Development Goals and the Mauritius Strategy, which provided a coherent framework for the international community's work. Data would help overcome obstacles to the implementation of the Programme of Action and the Strategy. He called upon development partners to provide comprehensive and timely support, integrating financial resources, technology development and deployment, and capacity-building to accompany the region's economic reform. Despite the many constraints facing them, small island developing States had made a considerable effort to mainstream sustainable development. It was deplorable that 15 years after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, they were still having to appeal for financial resources, access to affordable and appropriate technology, and capacity-building, all of which were fundamental to implementation.

34. Natural disasters were a major obstacle to sustainable development. Developing countries were extremely vulnerable to such disasters and therefore urgently needed enhanced monitoring and early-warning capacity in order to minimize their damage. He hoped that the international community would go beyond humanitarian assistance and help developing countries build capacity in the area of disaster prevention, reduction and preparedness. SADC deeply appreciated the appeal, contained in the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, for donors and funding institutions to systematically invest in disaster risk reduction as an integral and targeted component of humanitarian assistance and development cooperation (A/61/229, para. 85). There was also a need, as recognized by the Secretary-General (para. 86), for Member States and Strategy stakeholders to increase their financial contributions to the United Nations Trust Fund for Disaster Reduction to ensure adequate support for the implementation of the Hyogo Framework for Action.

35. The solution to the world's ever-deteriorating environment lay in technological innovation and technology transfer and dissemination. To that end, efforts to address climate change and remove obstacles to international cooperation needed to be stepped up. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol remained important instruments in that regard. Demand for clean energy was growing around the world. Markets for wind and solar power were doubling every two or three years, while clean coal technologies were at least 25 per cent more efficient than traditional coal-fired power plants. Investment in energy efficiency was essential to saving energy and reducing costs. An effective global response to climate change required active cooperation and strengthened action by all countries, taking into account their common but differentiated responsibilities and their respective capabilities.

36. For years, the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification had been beset by a shortage of funds. The international community should give due consideration to the issue and actively explore a mutually beneficial mechanism for technology transfer that would be conducive to the implementation of the Convention. The developed countries should fulfil their obligations and provide developing countries with financial and technological support. An integrated approach remained critical and deserved adequate attention. SADC therefore called for the Convention to be strengthened and further supported, and for the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to be given adequate resources to support projects in developing countries.

37. SADC was convinced that the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Cartagena Protocol on Biosafety would greatly enhance efforts to protect biodiversity and biosafety. The Convention also played a key role with regard to the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction. Both the Convention and the Protocol needed to be implemented effectively in order to maximize the benefits of biotechnology, while minimizing its potential risks to the environment, biodiversity and human health.

38. SADC took note of the report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on its ninth special session (A/61/25 (Supp. No. 25)) and supported the decisions contained therein. It welcomed the selection of six African countries as pilot countries for the implementation of the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-Building. Adequate funding and technical assistance was needed to ensure full implementation of the Plan.

39. **Mr. Gatan** (Philippines) said that the promotion of sustainable energy was a central component of the national development strategy for the Philippines. To that end, the Government had promoted a policy to achieve self-reliance in energy through the use of indigenous and renewable energy resources and alternative fuels, and by enhancing energy efficiency and conservation programmes. Thermal energy was now the primary source of electricity generation, placing the Philippines at the forefront of geothermal energy use, and at the cutting edge of technology. However, the high initial cost of exploiting renewable energy sources had slowed progress in that area. Energy security was expected to continue to have a direct effect on development, so technical and financial innovations should be combined to lower the cost of technology for more efficient use and conservation of fossil-based fuels, and for tapping renewable sources of energy.

40. The World Summit on Sustainable Development had promoted partnerships in support of development, including the delivery of affordable and reliable energy services. He appealed to the international community and all stakeholders to take a comprehensive approach to the issue of energy security within the larger context of sustainable development.

41. With reference to the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction, he said the Philippines had a high risk of exposure to natural disasters, and that recent events had underscored the need for a systematic and consistent implementation of risk reduction measures. Already, the strategies had included the dissemination of information on multiple hazards to provide a firm basis for the improvement of early warning systems, contingency planning, and sound plans for land use and development. In addition, training of emergency response personnel, reassessment of national capacity and risk factors had been addressed in a thrust towards the formulation of an integrated and holistic disaster risk management framework.

42. International assistance was needed to ensure the successful outcome of national efforts in that regard, as had been recognized in various resolutions and environmental agreements. In that context, he expressed appreciation for assistance granted by the partners of the Philippines and by the United Nations system in addressing the country's inherent vulnerability to natural disaster. Enhanced institutional and community capacity-building would boost disaster preparedness and response to natural or man-made disasters, such as the recent oil spill in Guimaras province, the worst maritime disaster in Philippine history. The world was constantly undergoing changes with which adaptation responses could not keep pace. It was therefore crucial that commitments on the use of risk reduction strategies and measures to improve resilience should be fulfilled.

43. **Mr. Park** Chun-kyoo (Republic of Korea) said that the trend towards achieving sustainable development, with the increased involvement of all stakeholders, was an indication that the international community had made progress in realizing its

commitments. He also recognized that the concept of sustainable development had been gaining ground as a universally shared goal.

44. His delegation looked forward to the report of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance and the Environment, and expected it to provide guidance in more efficient ways of achieving concrete results. Given the complexity of environmental issues, the United Nations Environment Programme should take the initiative in coordinating the environmental activities of the United Nations, offer policy guidance and set priorities based on hard science, while considering the implications for technological support and capacity-building.

45. His Government expected the fifteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development to serve as a platform for discussing more consolidated policy options and paving the way for substantial improvements in sustainable development.

46. **Mr. Gerus** (Belarus) said that for over two years, Belarus had been carrying out a new national strategy for sustainable social and economic development up to 2020, and that it was an active member of the Commission on Sustainable Development. Belarusian experts made great efforts to promote the application of the Convention to Combat Desertification in the relevant areas of Central and Eastern Europe. As a country with large tracts of forest, Belarus supported the work of the Forum on Forests and looked forward to the production of a non-legally binding instrument on all types of forests. More active international cooperation on the sustainable use of forests might help forestry to make a significant contribution to the attainment of internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

47. The Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change had entered into force for Belarus in November 2005, although for technical reasons Belarus had not been listed in Annex B to the Protocol. At the eleventh Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention, Belarus had announced its readiness to limit its emissions of greenhouse gases in the period 2008-2012 to 95 per cent of the 1990 volume. It might be noted that the corresponding volume for neighbouring countries with similar levels of development was 100 per cent. It was to be hoped that Annex B would be duly amended at the next Conference of the Parties.

48. **Ms. Mammadova** (Azerbaijan) said that it was imperative for the international community to implement commitments under the Conventions, to provide adequate resources to that end and to support synergies among implementation processes. She underscored the importance of capacity-building in order to enable States to integrate the objectives of the Conventions into national, subregional and regional plans for their subsequent implementation. Azerbaijan had reflected those objectives in its national development strategies and conducted impact assessments through its monitoring mechanisms.

49. It was, however, regrettable that in 2006, despite heightened awareness of the challenges posed by desertification and the need to safeguard biodiversity, Azerbaijan had experienced devastating fires. Over 600 square km had been damaged, with what was expected to be long-lasting effects on soil quality and stability, as well as on the microclimate of the territories. In that context, she highlighted a number of measures formulated by the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of Azerbaijan for mitigating the impact of fires, including the importance of needs assessment and rehabilitation measures.

50. She called on all stakeholders, including the secretariats of the environmental Conventions, to support and complement domestic efforts to implement such measures, and recalled that the Conference of the Parties had invited the Global Environment Facility (GEF) to make financial resources available for capacity-building activities, and to facilitate the coordination between GEF and Convention focal points at the country level. Timely support and synergies would contribute greatly to reversing massive biodiversity loss in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, and to achieving agreed sustainable development objectives and targets.

51. **Ms. Grau** (Switzerland) said that the adoption of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management was a major step towards the successful implementation of the results of the World Summit on Sustainable Development. Switzerland also attached great importance to the Marrakesh Process on production and consumption patterns, which it had established, and to the work of the Commission on Sustainable Development. In addition to appealing for

efficient energy use, the Commission should aim at creating conditions that encouraged investment in sustainable methods of energy production and consumption.

52. Switzerland would continue to support the global platform for disaster risk reduction, which was intended to serve as a strategic forum for Governments to achieve measurable results in disaster risk reduction. To that end, all stakeholders should continue to search for innovative funding solutions. Switzerland was also convinced of the need for predictable financing of the secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction through an annual allocation from the regular budget of the organization. Such an investment would help to materialize the political commitments undertaken with the adoption of the Hyogo Framework for Action. Her delegation was grateful to the Secretary-General for establishing a link between the disaster risk reduction activities and climate change adaptation programmes at all levels.

53. The best way to strengthen international environmental governance would be to strengthen UNEP and, in the longer term, upgrade its status. In the initial phase, universal participation in UNEP activities could be envisaged, according to modalities to be defined, to allow all States to submit proposals and participate actively in the work of the Programme.

54. **Mr. Capelle** (Marshall Islands) said that although small island developing States contributed the least to climate change, they were nonetheless the most vulnerable to its consequences, and the least able to adapt to its impact. The Marshall Islands, comprised of approximately 180 square km that were on average 2 m above sea level, depended on the ocean as a means of sustenance and survival. However, the ocean was also a source of concern during severe weather conditions, and there was reason to fear that sea-level rise would threaten the very existence of the group of islands. That risk was shared by many other low-lying Pacific island nations, and the loss of their collective environment and cultural resources was troubling. He therefore reiterated the need for urgent action at the global level to halt and reverse the trend; without such corrective action, national efforts at sustainable development would be rendered meaningless.

55. Renewing his delegation's support for the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Kyoto Protocol, he called on all States, especially the major emitters, to ratify the Protocol without delay, and for strong leadership on the part of the major industrialized countries. He further called for international support to the small island developing States in developing and implementing comprehensive adaptation strategies.

56. Conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity played an integral part in the social and economic development of the Marshall Islands. The state of the world's ocean and fish stocks were of utmost concern, as was the prevalence of illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing within and outside the exclusive economic zone of the Marshall Islands. Such activities had a severe effect on the marine biodiversity of the region, and gravely undermined the livelihood of a population that relied on fisheries as their primary means of survival. Regional and international cooperation in that regard should focus on assisting the small island developing States in building capacity for monitoring and surveillance, and on assisting small island nations to develop domestic fisheries in order to ensure the adequate conservation and management of the region's fish stocks.

57. **Ms. Bruell-Melchior** (Monaco) said that Prince Albert II had created an environmental protection and sustainable development foundation to address climate change, biodiversity and water-related issues. The Government had established domestic mechanisms and intended to take international action to meet its greenhouse gas emission reduction goals. In that regard, the creation of the working group on the future commitments of developed countries after 2012 was promising, but must be accompanied by more sustained efforts.

58. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification should be strengthened and implemented. It should also be recognized as an international instrument that could help in achieving the Millennium Development Goals. As part of its international cooperation policy, Monaco was making active efforts to combat drought and desertification, especially in North Africa and the Sahel region. In partnership with local authorities, it was developing and financing programmes for the reforestation, conservation and restoration of degraded lands.

59. With regard to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Monaco supported the Brazilian initiative to proclaim 2010 the International Year of Biological

Diversity and was particularly pleased that the Conference of the Parties had recognized the regulation of activities in marine areas beyond national jurisdictions. In that connection, she noted that France, Italy and Monaco had designated an area for the protection of cetaceans. Referring to the report of the Secretary-General on universal membership of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum of the United Nations Environment Programme (A/61/322), she said that her delegation looked forward to the second phase of the United Nations reform initiative in the environmental field.

60. **Mr. Hassan** (Iraq) said that striking a balance among the economic, social and environmental components of development was one of the greatest challenges facing developing countries. Meeting it required stronger linkages between the normative and operational work of the United Nations system, which in turn required enhancement of the mandate of the Economic and Social Council. His delegation hoped for greater efforts to adopt the draft resolution on reforming the Economic and Social Council to better enable it to carry out its tasks.

61. The integration of developing countries into the global economy demanded that the developed countries remove restrictions on the movement of goods, services and technology. Both good governance and the organizational principles governing the private sector and financial institutions needed to be enhanced. His delegation expected donor countries to fulfil their ODA commitments and to supervise economic projects on the ground rather than just make promises or provide funds that could be targeted by certain parties for illicit profits.

62. In Iraq, terrorism was bringing about destruction of infrastructure, shortages and unemployment. He hoped that the international community would work in partnership with Iraq during its period of economic and political transition. Despite its difficulties, Iraq remained committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and was amending its trade and investment laws in the hope of attracting foreign investment and participating actively in the global trade system.

63. *Ms. Gomes (Portugal), Rapporteur, took the Chair.*

64. **Mr. Jiménez Sauma** (Mexico) said that, to meet its commitments under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Mexico had presented its Third National Greenhouse Gas Inventory and was finalizing its Third National Communication to be submitted to the twelfth Conference of the Parties to the Convention in Kenya. It also planned to conclude its strategy for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and adapting to climate change. It had hosted the Second Ministerial Meeting on the Gleneagles Dialogue on Climate Change, Clean Energy and Sustainable Development as part of the discussions under the Framework Convention.

65. With regard to desertification, Mexico had presented its Third National Communication on national efforts to implement the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, including actions to combat land degradation and mitigate the adverse effects of drought. It had also established a national system to combat the desertification of natural resources with the participation of federal dependencies, state governments, rural producers, NGOs and academics, and had carried out reforestation initiatives on over 1 million hectares and revegetation programmes in semi-desert areas. He reiterated the need to step up efforts to implement the Hyogo Framework for Action, notably through the establishment of a culture of prevention and risk mitigation activities. Over the past few years, his country had developed early warning systems for tropical cyclones, earthquakes and the Popocatépetl Volcano near Mexico City. His delegation believed that the United Nations should maintain an appropriate balance between emergency relief and capacity-building for disaster prevention, particularly in developing and least developed countries.

66. **Mr. Murillo Carrasco** (Bolivia) said that Bolivia was committed to multilateralism and the maintenance, conservation and development of the environment from a global perspective. Its new Government was fighting poverty, inequality and lack of opportunities and was also creating jobs for the development and protection of the environment. Under a new development plan that would bring significant qualitative changes to the country, his Government intended to consolidate its model of diversified and comprehensive development based on value-added products and citizen participation, resulting in a more equitable distribution of income. The concept of shared responsibility was particularly apt in the field of biodiversity and, in that regard, Bolivia would work closely with countries that

held similar views on guaranteeing the protection of biodiversity and increased trade and the intellectual property rights to local indigenous products, such as traditional medicines, that were widely used in the country.

67. The sustainable use of Bolivia's biodiversity resources would contribute to food security and nutrition for the population, particularly for the indigenous peoples. The development and trading of new products derived from biodiversity would allow for the transfer of technology and knowledge to the production and services sector. Through efficient management of its protected areas, Bolivia sought to preserve its biodiversity, a strategic resource for its development. The eighth Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity had recognized the sovereignty of States over their biological and genetic resources and their right to use those resources in a just and equitable manner. Bolivia supported that view and reaffirmed its commitment to the environmental agreements to which it was a party.

68. *Mr. Fonseca (Brazil), Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.*

69. **Mr. Alsaker** (Norway) said that Norway welcomed the growing recognition that environmental challenges must be addressed in order to reduce poverty and solve the world's development problems. The Commission on Sustainable Development should continue leading the effort to follow up on the Rio and Johannesburg documents. Norway attached great importance to the issues addressed in the Commission's two-year cycle. With respect to sustainable development, his Government cooperated closely with civil society, but the most important follow-up on its national strategy was conducted by the different ministries within their fields of responsibility, with overall coordination by the Ministry of Finance. Norway had also prepared a national set of indicators and had asked its neighbour, Sweden, to conduct a peer review of its work the following year and suggest possible improvements.

70. Noting the devastating effects of climate change and its acceleration in the Arctic region, he called for a truly global regime to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Norway and other countries had accepted their emission commitments under the Kyoto Protocol. However, the international community had a responsibility to offer significant assistance to the world's poorest and least resourceful countries, which had not contributed much to the build-up of greenhouse gases, but were still vulnerable to the negative effects of climate change. Reducing greenhouse gas emissions would make a crucial contribution to global-level disaster risk management. Norway urged all parties to the Convention on Climate Change to concentrate on achieving real progress on both aspects of climate change — mitigation and adaptation. It welcomed the recent inclusion of the 2010 biodiversity target as a component of the Millennium Development Goal of ensuring environmental sustainability. It also welcomed the progress made under the International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture. His Government had decided to build a global seed vault in the Svalbard archipelago in the Arctic, which would contain duplicates of seed varieties already stored in gene banks elsewhere and provide an additional safety net for the world's genetic heritage, for use in emergency situations.

71. **Mr. Al-Hajrey** (Kuwait) said his country's median income compared favourably with that of a number of States members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and that it was one of four Arab countries to be classified as a high human development country by the Human Development Index in 2002. Kuwait was ahead of schedule in its efforts to achieve all eight of the Millennium Development Goals, and, although a developing country itself, had disbursed over US$ 12.5 million in development assistance to 101 countries through the Kuwait Fund for Arab Economic Development (KFAED). That amount was twice the internationally agreed-upon ODA target. Kuwait maintained its firm belief in the potential of international cooperation to overcome the challenges facing sustainable development.

72. *Ms. Intelmann (Estonia) resumed the Chair.*

73. **Mr. Al-Gazali** (Oman) said that his country's commitment to balancing sustainable development with environmental protection was reflected at both the international and national levels. Oman had acceded to a number of regional and international environmental agreements, including the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the

Convention on Biological Diversity and the Kyoto Protocol. Oman was also implementing national plans designed to make full use of available resources while keeping in mind environmental concerns. People remained at the centre of development, and the Sultanate was focusing on developing human resources to give its people the opportunity to raise their standard of living without depriving future generations of their fair share of natural resources. His delegation called on the international community to provide financial support to developing countries' efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals as well as a balance between exploitation of their resources and environmental protection.

74. **Mr. Al-Mabrok** (Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) said that despite notable progress, there were still many challenges standing in the way of achieving sustainable development in its economic, social and environmental aspects. In the least developed countries in particular, weak economic structures and limited resources made it difficult to finance development plans, and increased assistance was necessary to enable them to acquire information and communications technology and develop human resources. A fair and non-discriminatory trading system and the removal of obstacles to sustainable development were the keys to implementing the recommendations of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. His delegation also stressed the importance of support for the United Nations Environment Programme and the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-Building.

75. Natural disasters were on the rise. The international community should take steps in line with the Hyogo Framework for Action to reduce their economic and social expenditures through innovative funding policies and enhanced early warning mechanisms. The Kyoto Protocol to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change also needed to be implemented to preserve climate stability for current and future generations, and support and funding should be provided for the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification to enable sustainable development in arid zones that were populated by millions of people.

76. His country was committed to the goals of Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. In addition to ratifying the Kyoto Protocol, it had implemented a number of sustainable development and environmental protection programmes of its own, including policies to encourage the use of cleaner burning fuels and the expansion of green cover projects in desert areas to absorb carbon dioxide. Protecting the environment was the greatest service that could be provided to future generations.

*The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.*

United Nations A/C.2/61/SR.22

# General Assembly
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## Second Committee

**Summary record of the 22nd meeting**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 26 October 2006, at 3 p.m.

*Chairperson:* Ms. Intelmann ..... (Estonia)

## Contents

Agenda item 40: Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources (*continued*)

Agenda item 55: Globalization and interdependence (*continued*)

(b) International migration and development (*continued*)

Agenda item 53: Sustainable development (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (*continued*)

(b) Follow-up to and implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (*continued*)

(c) International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (*continued*)

(d) Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind (*continued*)

(f) Convention on Biological Diversity (*continued*)

(g) Report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on its ninth special session (*continued*)

Agenda item 54: Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) (*continued*)

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06-58745 (E)

*The meeting was called to order at 3.15 p.m.*

**Agenda item 40: Permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources** (*continued*) (A/C.2/61/L.13)

*Draft resolution on permanent sovereignty of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and of the Arab population in the occupied Syrian Golan over their natural resources*

1. **The Chairperson** informed the Committee that Jordan and Mauritania had joined the sponsors.

2. **Mr. Edrees** (Egypt), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/61/L.13, said that it was a reflection of the Secretary-General's report (A/61/67-E/2006/13), which demonstrated that the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, continued to deepen the economic and social hardships of the Palestinian people. The majority of the paragraphs were similar to those of General Assembly resolution 60/183. However, some amended and updated language had been included and two new paragraphs had been inserted: the eleventh preambular paragraph, which expressed concern at the widespread destruction to vital infrastructure in the Occupied Palestinian Territory; and paragraph 8, which called upon Israel to cease its destruction of vital infrastructure, including water pipelines and sewage networks.

**Agenda item 55: Globalization and interdependence** (*continued*)

**(b) International migration and development** (*continued*) (A/C.2/61/L.12)

*Draft resolution on international migration and development*

3. **Mr. Oosthuizen** (South Africa), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/61/L.12 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that the resolution expressed the notion of partnership in advancing the dialogue on international migration and development and the need to focus on the challenges involved in migration. He hoped that the draft resolution, which was broadly based on agreed language from previous resolutions, would be supported by the Committee.

**Agenda item 53: Sustainable development** (*continued*) (A/61/225)

**(a) Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development** (*continued*) (A/61/258)

**(b) Follow-up to and implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States** (*continued*) (A/61/268 and 277)

**(c) International Strategy for Disaster Reduction** (*continued*) (A/61/229)

**(d) Protection of global climate for present and future generations of mankind** (*continued*) (A/61/225)

**(f) Convention on Biological Diversity** (*continued*) (A/61/225)

**(g) Report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on its ninth special session** (*continued*) (A/61/322)

4. **Mr. Muffadal** (Sudan) said that the evident nexus between disaster and conflict warranted careful attention. Disasters generated conditions that were conducive to conflicts, while conflicts diverted much-needed resources from disaster preparedness and response. The floods that had swamped dozens of villages in the Sudan in the summer of 2006 had been exacerbated by the fact that the Government of National Unity had been dealing with the ongoing challenges of reconstruction, internal displacement and refugee resettlement, DDR programmes and humanitarian assistance to Darfur.

5. In order to enable a country like the Sudan to effectively deal with disasters, the international community needed to provide comprehensive assistance in fields such as early warning systems, capacity-building, peace support, rehabilitation and reconstruction, debt relief, investment and trade. The benefits would be felt beyond the borders of the Sudan,

ultimately contributing to food security and poverty eradication in the whole region.

6. The Sudan looked forward to the adoption of a draft resolution on the implementation of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction and called on the different stakeholders to increase their efforts to achieve the objectives of the Strategy.

7. **Ms. Filip** (Observer for the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)) said that the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and other international commitments had not produced the expected results because national decision makers had not understood that sustainable development involved social, economic and environmental considerations.

8. The Union was committed to promoting sustainable development approaches among parliaments and had recently adopted a resolution on the role of parliaments in environmental management and in combating global degradation of the environment. The members of the different parliaments had thus agreed that national budgets should be looked at through the prism of the environment. "Green budgets" viewed the management of public funds from the standpoint of sustainability, thereby harmonizing the economy with a variety of social objectives and making sustainable development a top priority in policymaking. Most importantly, the resolution prepared the political terrain for green budgets to be discussed in national and international forums.

9. Together with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), IPU had begun a training programme for members of parliament on environmental issues such as the sustainable management of water, biodiversity and energy. Plans had been made to produce a handbook for parliamentarians on sustainable development, which would cover the concrete applications of green budget principles.

10. **Mr. Bhagwat-Singh** (Observer for the World Conservation Union (IUCN)) said that the world was on the brink of a significant change in energy production and consumption patterns and that his organization was studying the implications of that change for biodiversity. It was important to ensure that new technologies were environmentally sustainable and that new solutions to energy challenges did not create worse conditions or undermine the Millennium Development Goals.

11. As regarded disaster reduction, IUCN was coordinating a major effort to improve fragile coastal ecosystems. In particular, it was promoting ecosystem restoration for sustainable livelihoods in the tsunami-ravaged areas of the Indian Ocean region through the Mangroves for the Future Initiative. IUCN was also associated with the Global Partnership for Forest Landscape Restoration, which was an initiative involving 11 countries, 11 international organizations and 3 NGOs.

12. As regarded desertification, IUCN was aware that the national action plans against desertification developed under the aegis of the Convention to Combat Desertification had not had the desired impact in many countries. It therefore stood ready to work with the ad hoc intergovernmental intersessional working group established by the parties to the Convention to share the lessons it had learned.

13. Concerning the Convention on Biological Diversity, IUCN urged Governments to reverse the current degradation of ecosystem services on which development depended. It supported the proposal of the Conference of the Parties to declare 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity and welcomed the progress made at the third session of the Conference with respect to the requirements for documentation accompanying the shipments of living modified organisms.

14. **Mr. Gospodinov** (Observer for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC)) said that sustainable development required a culture of resilience at the community level and that all Governments and stakeholders needed to recognize the valuable role of volunteers as bridges between communities and national and local authorities.

15. Good preparedness, including programmes based on sustainable development at the community level, did more to diminish the impact of disasters than actual response work. In that respect, the Federation's vulnerability and capacity assessment programmes were invaluable. IFRC also contributed to preparedness for extreme weather conditions through its climate centre at The Hague.

16. No single element threatened a community's development more than the impact of disease. Many countries in Asia, Europe and Africa were threatened with social and economic disaster due to HIV/AIDS and avian flu. IFRC had worked with the United

Nations, the World Health Organization and other partners to address the threat of avian and human influenza and, through its national societies, was able to provide advice on avian flu in local languages.

17. Finally, Governments needed to ensure that all preparedness and response actions were delivered without discrimination of any kind and that gender perspectives were integrated in community disaster and health programmes.

18. **Mr. Bahlouli** (United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)) said that energy and the environment formed one of the three pillars of the work of UNIDO. Its energy programmes aimed to de-link energy use from economic growth and reduce its environmental impacts, emphasizing energy-saving measures and the use of clean and sustainable energy for production, especially in rural areas. The Organization's environmental programmes sought to prevent industrial pollution and manage waste in an ecologically sound manner. Since 1994, UNIDO, in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), had established 31 cleaner production programmes and centres around the world.

19. UNIDO also worked closely with governments, the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and the Multilateral Fund for the Implementation of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. In the framework of GEF international waters programmes, UNIDO was promoting programmes to boost the productivity of water by lowering consumption and increasing reuse and recycling, as well as reducing waste and pollution. It was also assisting countries bordering large marine ecosystems to better manage their coastal areas and industrial fisheries. In addition, the Organization was working to help countries fulfil their obligations under the Montreal Protocol and the Stockholm Convention on the Elimination of Persistent Organic Pollutants and helping developing and transition countries to modernize their industrial production techniques through the Kyoto Protocol clean development mechanism.

20. **Ms. Asmady** (Indonesia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that her delegation wished to register serious concern and displeasure at the statement made the previous day by the delegation of Singapore, particularly the unnecessary and misleading references to Indonesia. She reiterated her Government's strong commitment to addressing the problem of the haze episodes caused by fires. As a demonstration of its seriousness, the Government had channelled resources from local governments and government institutions to put out as many fires as possible and to prevent their recurrence. For the same purpose, it was also vigorously enforcing laws on environmental protection and sustainable development. In addition, it had set aside some US$ 10 million for cloud-seeding and fire-fighting operations and had leased two Russian fire-fighting aircraft. Unfortunately, the unusually long dry season and the late arrival of the rainy season had frustrated the Government's best efforts. But it would persevere.

21. It was exceedingly counterproductive for Singapore to disparage the earnest efforts of the Indonesian Government to solve the haze problem. Indeed, the badgering by Singapore was tantamount to interference in the domestic affairs of Indonesia, which her delegation found deeply regrettable. Indonesia did not understand the motives of Singapore in making that disparaging statement, unless there was some malice behind it.

22. The environment was just one of many bilateral issues between Singapore and Indonesia. They included various issues related to environmental degradation, such as the export of hazardous waste, illegal logging and sand mining. The Government of Singapore would be well advised to look at the root causes of any problem and to view the dynamics of its bilateral relations with Indonesia in a broader context. It must also pay due attention to issues that were of great concern to Indonesia. For instance, Singapore must cease to give protection and sanctuary to corruptors of Indonesian origin and their ill-gotten wealth. On that issue, Singapore had not been forthcoming at all.

23. There were already bilateral and regional arrangements within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) for addressing the problem of haze pollution, and her Government remained open to any initiative that would maximize cooperation on the problem. Full use should be made of those arrangements, instead of misusing the forum of the United Nations.

24. In conclusion, she wished the Committee to know that she had contacted the Indonesian Embassy in

Singapore the previous day and had been informed that the air in Singapore was clear and healthy.

25. **Mr. Cheok** (Singapore), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that Singapore was heartened by the commitment that Indonesia was showing in dealing with the haze problem. His Government was appreciative of the measures taken thus far, in particular the pledge by the Indonesian President to ratify the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution. Singapore had also welcomed the Indonesian Government's hosting of the Sub-regional Ministerial Meeting on Transboundary Haze Pollution earlier in the month. The meeting had deemed that the haze problem had not been adequately addressed by the region and had agreed to seek international expertise so as to develop a comprehensive plan of action, with an effective monitoring and reporting mechanism.

26. Transboundary haze pollution was a problem that affected millions of lives, as the Indonesian Environment Minister himself had recognized, and it was a regional problem that affected not just Singapore, but also other countries in South-East Asia. The countries of the region had been trying for more than a decade to resolve it, with very limited success. The time had come for countries to put aside their differences and move forward to try to deal with the issue.

27. As for the air quality in Singapore, he understood that heavy rainfall, coupled with a change in the prevailing wind patterns, accounted for the recent improvement. However, earlier in October, air quality readings had reached the very unhealthy level of 150 on the Pollutant Standard Index. The problem was ongoing and Singapore dealt with it every year. His Government looked forward to working with friends and partners to find a definitive solution to the serious health and environmental issue of transboundary haze pollution.

28. He would refrain from commenting on the other issues raised by the representative of Indonesia, as he was not certain that they fell within the purview of the Second Committee.

**Agenda item 54: Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)** (*continued*) (A/61/262 and A/61/363)

29. **The Chairperson** invited the Committee to engage in a general discussion of the item.

30. **Mr. Kumalo** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, recalled that the decision to upgrade the status of UN-Habitat had been sponsored by the Group of 77 and China. They commended the progress made in the first four years by UN-Habitat as a full-fledged programme and noted with satisfaction its active role in assisting Member States to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, particularly those related to water and sanitation and to slum upgrading. The Group urged development partners to give UN-Habitat the financial and technical support it needed to meet the growing demands for assistance at both national and regional levels.

31. The United Nations Habitat and Human Settlements Foundation had never been adequately capitalized. While the resource mobilization strategy of UN-Habitat had increased resources steadily over the past five years, the continued inadequacy and unpredictability of funding for the Foundation, attributed to the imbalance between earmarked and non-earmarked contributions and the dependence on a small number of donors, lessened the Programme's ability to function. Donors should consider increasing voluntary non-earmarked contributions to the Foundation, preferably on a multi-year basis. The international community and financial institutions should support the Water and Sanitation Trust Fund and the Slum Upgrading Facility. In addition, in order to revitalize the Foundation, the Secretary-General should consider increasing the regular budget of UN-Habitat.

32. Water and sanitation improvements and slum upgrading must be addressed in an integrated and holistic manner, particularly at the implementation level, as called for by the Commission on Sustainable Development, which had also stressed the strategic links between sustainable human settlements and sources of energy. The Group was pleased to note the progress made in raising awareness of slum, urbanization and urban poverty issues at the highest levels of government. Ministerial meetings in various regions had provided strong impetus for focusing on

such issues. The Group of 77 and China welcomed those efforts and invited the attention of the international community to their outcomes. The Group also underscored the importance of the UN-Habitat regional consultative forums, which provided opportunities for sharing knowledge, experience and best practices. UN-Habitat should promote those forums and, where possible, provide support for the participation of developing countries.

33. UN-Habitat had acquired invaluable experience in disaster preparedness and recovery and should be more involved in the activities of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee in that area. To mitigate the impacts of disasters, the Group urged the international donor community to provide financial resources and technical expertise for the establishment of early warning systems.

34. In the ongoing reform process within the United Nations, programmes such as UN-Habitat, which had a clear and unique pro-poor mandate, should not be sacrificed or diluted. Rather, they should be bolstered and strengthened, with more predictable core funding for their work, including at country level.

35. **Mr. Ahmed-Sambo** (Nigeria) commended the efforts of UN-Habitat to address the challenges of overcrowding, unemployment, lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation, and lack of health and education facilities in cities. His delegation encouraged the Programme to sustain the momentum on those issues. Rapid urbanization was a challenge to all countries, but especially to developing countries. That was particularly true in Africa, the continent with the fastest urban growth rate. Rapid growth of cities was taking place at a time of worsening living conditions, pervasive poverty, unemployment and debilitating diseases. Slum upgrading programmes must therefore be underpinned by pro-poor urban policies, effective legislation, adequate budgetary allocations and multisectoral approaches. Central Governments should be actively involved in encouraging private-sector investment in pro-poor housing programmes. Partnership with civil society and other stakeholders was also imperative in tackling the problems of human settlements, as had been underscored at the third session of the World Urban Forum.

36. Nigeria had recently launched a water and sanitation forum aimed at providing access to sanitation and a safe and adequate clean water supply, especially for the poor. The forum attested to his Government's support for the water and sanitation and the slum upgrading initiatives of UN-Habitat.

37. Nigeria was pleased with the support that UN-Habitat had given to the African Union, especially through the establishment of the African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development as a vehicle to facilitate implementation of the Habitat Agenda and further efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals in Africa. His delegation also noted with satisfaction the collaboration between UN-Habitat and the African Development Bank and other agencies. Those efforts should be vigorously supported to achieve sustainable shelter objectives in Africa.

38. The ability of UN-Habitat to deliver results would depend largely on the resources put at its disposal. Nigeria once again stressed the urgent need to address the obvious imbalance between earmarked and non-earmarked resources, and called on donors to increase their non-earmarked contributions and thereby contribute to the realization of the objectives of nationally owned development strategies.

39. **Ms. Ovcharenko** (Russian Federation) said that her delegation endorsed the Secretary-General's recommendations on improving the efficiency of UN-Habitat and its cooperation with Governments at the country level. It particularly supported a recommendation of particular concern to States with economies in transition concerning the provision of secure tenure to the urban poor. In that connection, it supported UN-Habitat's efforts to respond more effectively to the urbanization of poverty and social exclusion at the national and international levels. It attached great importance to closer cooperation between UN-Habitat and other United Nations agencies and institutions. Data collection and analysis should be improved and monitoring networks should be more widely distributed, especially at the local and regional level. Mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of human settlements projects should be introduced.

40. In that connection, her delegation welcomed the outcome of the third session of the World Urban Forum, particularly the acknowledgement of the need for closer coordination among Governments, local authorities, civil society and international institutions in supporting initiatives to improve the living

conditions of the poorest and most vulnerable groups in urban areas.

41. The Russian Federation had recently stepped up its participation in the activities of UN-Habitat, as evidenced by the doubling of its contribution to the Programme's budget in 2006. The entry into force of a new bilateral agreement on cooperation between the Russian Federation and UN-Habitat heralded even closer cooperation in the future.

42. **Mr. Jha** (India) noted from the report of the Secretary-General in document A/61/262 that, by 2007, for the first time in human history more people would live in cities than in rural areas. That fact and other emerging trends would have a profound effect on the implementation of the Habitat Agenda. The twenty-first century would increasingly be an urban world, whose well-being would depend on how the problems of urban poverty, pollution, planning and infrastructure were tackled. It was no coincidence that the 2005 World Summit had recognized the urgent need for increased resources for affordable housing and infrastructure, prioritizing slum prevention and upgrading.

43. India recognized that the problem of shelter was closely linked to the eradication of poverty and that any policy on habitat needed a very strong pro-poor focus. The 1998 National Housing and Habitat Policy of the Government of India had not only recognized housing as a physical asset but had placed it in the context of the overall sustainable living habitat, highlighting the need for adequate infrastructure, including social infrastructure. India sought to achieve the target of housing for all by 2007.

44. Poverty continued to be one of the major developmental concerns for many developing countries, and providing infrastructure support in both urban and rural areas continued to be a major challenge. The developing countries needed financial and technical assistance for their efforts to eradicate poverty through generation of productive employment, creation of a durable economic infrastructure and food security.

45. The growth in urban population was reflected in the growth of slums. India had initiated substantial work to upgrade urban infrastructure and make shelter affordable for the poor. However, the proliferation of slums remained a major concern. The policy of the Indian Government endorsed slum upgrading and improvement, rather than clearance. It also sought to improve employment and livelihood opportunities in rural areas.

46. International cooperation to provide financial and technical assistance, including technology transfer, needed to be a priority if the developing countries were to achieve the targets agreed at the Millennium Summit. In the spirit of South-South solidarity, India was willing to continue sharing appropriate technology, particularly in the field of cost-effective, environmentally friendly and disaster-resistant construction. India was supportive of efforts to strengthen the capacity of UN-Habitat to fulfil its mandate, by the provision of non-earmarked, predictable funding and regular budget resources for its programme activities. UN-Habitat should focus on operational work through field projects in developing countries and continue to coordinate with multilateral and regional financial and development institutions.

47. **Mr. Shafil** (Bangladesh) observed that the pace of urbanization was rapidly growing worldwide. As a result, economic, social and political pressures of urban poverty, especially in developing countries, were causing further expansion of slums. The results were serious overcrowding and a lack of basic services, including water and sanitation. Sustainable urbanization was thus one of the most pressing challenges for the global community today. The slum population was expected to rise at a rate of 27 million people a year during the period 2000-2020.

48. The Millennium Declaration entailed the commitment to achieve a significant improvement in the lives of at least 100 million slum-dwellers by the year 2020. However, the report *State of the World's Cities 2006/7* had furnished evidence of several emerging trends that would have a profound effect on the implementation of the Habitat Agenda, the Millennium Development Goals, specifically targets 10 and 11 of Goal 7, and paragraph 56 (m) of the 2005 World Summit Outcome.

49. Bangladesh remained committed to the implementation of the Habitat Agenda for providing sustainable human settlements and adequate shelter in urban areas. The Government, with the assistance of the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements and funding from the United Nations Development Programme, had undertaken a programme entitled "Local Partnerships for Urban Poverty Alleviation",

intended to assist the poor population to acquire a secure place to live, together with opportunities for work. It called on the donor community to provide more assistance, both financial and technical, to UN-Habitat programmes.

50. **Mr. Wang** Qi (People's Republic of China) noted that many developing countries were faced with severe challenges in the sustainable development of human settlements. Nevertheless, instead of being pessimistic and evading their responsibilities, they had made political commitments, formulated well-targeted policies and implemented proactive reform programmes.

51. However, the question of human settlements was far from being resolved, with more than 900 million people, or 30 per cent of the world's urban population, still living in slums. In the absence of decisive action, that number was expected to rise to 2 billion in 30 years, almost exclusively in developing countries. In order to achieve the two objectives of adequate shelter for all and sustainable development of human settlements in an urbanizing world pursued by Habitat II, the Habitat Agenda must be implemented comprehensively and effectively.

52. Sustained economic growth was crucial to solving the human settlements problem, especially for the developing countries. At the same time, as housing was an important component of sustainable development, a scientific approach must be adopted that stressed comprehensive and coordinated development, so that efforts in the housing area were synchronized with population growth, development of productivity, rational exploitation of resources and environmental protection.

53. National Governments, which bore the primary responsibility for solving the problems related to human settlements, needed to formulate and implement policies and strategies with identified priorities, based on their respective national conditions and capabilities. For its part, the international community, particularly the developed countries, should put the common interests of mankind before anything else, providing financial, trade and debt relief facilities to the developing countries in order to create favourable external conditions for their social and economic development, which in turn would enhance their capability to improve their human settlements. Local governments, the private sector and all other partners of the Habitat Agenda should be encouraged to devote their dynamism and creativity to that common endeavour.

54. UN-Habitat in recent years had done much useful work in raising public awareness and disseminating best practices, and in implementing the Habitat Agenda. China endorsed further strengthening of UN-Habitat so that it could enhance its activities at country level in standard-setting and capacity-building.

55. Currently, China was going through rapid urbanization. Improving the living conditions of its people and providing safe and healthy human settlements represented an important task for the Government. In order to fulfil its commitments under Habitat II and the General Assembly special session on human settlements, the Chinese Government had taken vigorous measures. It had given full rein to initiatives of local governments, increased input in the construction of human settlements and engaged in comprehensive management of human settlements. In housing construction, it advocated centralized planning, rational lay-out, integrated development and prefabricated construction. At the same time, it had also stepped up the work of renovating old cities. Using incentives such as awards and special titles, the Government had tried to encourage local governments to invest in improving human settlements and make greater efforts in urban ecology, including tree-planting. China's cities had roads and public transport facilities that were in good condition and fully functional; its work on reducing urban noise and air pollution had yielded results; and it had improved rubbish collection and recycling in urban areas.

56. China stood ready to enhance cooperation and exchanges with other countries, in a continuous effort to implement the Habitat Agenda and the Millennium Development Goals, and to work for the improvement of human settlements, both in China and worldwide.

57. **Mr. Karanja** (Kenya) said that the urban development trends highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General (A/61/262) were disturbing. The report indicated that, in some regions, the rate of slum formation was nearly equal to the rate of urban growth. It further reported that, in many sub-Saharan African cities, the slum population already accounted for over 70 per cent of the urban population. In addition, most slum-dwellers lived in worse conditions than those in rural areas, threatened by preventable diseases,

insecurity, unemployment and illiteracy. The international community needed to take immediate remedial action.

58. Financing affordable housing and slum upgrading remained a major challenge to developing countries. The 2005 World Summit had called on the international community to prioritize slum prevention, slum upgrading and provision of housing-related infrastructure. Kenya continued to collaborate with countries in its region through the African Ministerial Conference on Housing and Urban Development, of which Kenya had hosted a special session in April 2006. The session had developed a common framework for slum upgrading and prevention. Kenya welcomed the signing of a memorandum of understanding between UN-Habitat and the African Development Bank to implement the Water for African Cities programme.

59. Kenya would continue to work with UN-Habitat and other partners towards slum upgrading. The Government had established the Kenya Slum Upgrading, Low Cost Housing and Infrastructure Fund, amounting to about US$ 7 million in the current year, from which all related activities would be financed. In addition, it had recently reviewed its national housing policy and intended to submit to Parliament comprehensive legislation aimed at encouraging construction of more affordable housing.

60. Kenya commended the Member States that had responded to the fund-raising efforts of the Executive Director, resulting in increased contributions to the Human Settlements Foundation. However, there was still a need for the international community to increase voluntary non-earmarked contributions, preferably on a multi-year basis. Kenya also called on the international donor community and financial institutions to support the Water and Sanitation Trust Fund and the Slum Upgrading Facility for UN-Habitat to assist developing countries in mobilizing public investment and private capital for slum upgrading, shelter and basic services.

61. Kenya welcomed the promulgation by the Secretary-General of the special annex to the financial rules of the United Nations for the Human Settlements Foundation, which would enable the Foundation to start lending operations for human settlements projects using its voluntary contributions.

62. **Ms. Mlade** (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies) (IFRC)) emphasized the link between human settlements and natural disasters. On the one hand, human settlements might result from the mass movement of people displaced by natural disaster. On the other, human settlements were highly vulnerable to nature's fury, frequently being overcrowded, flimsily constructed and located in high-risk areas. The disasters that had struck South and South-East Asia in 2004 and 2005 illustrated both sides of that coin. The Indian Ocean tsunami had taken a particular toll along the coastlines where people lived in make<hift houses. In Pakistan, although most earthquake victims had received winterized shelter, others had been forced to leave their villages for urban areas.

63. As the response to those disasters had unfolded, the international humanitarian community had become acutely aware not only of the need to assist countries in mitigating the effects of natural disasters through housing policy, but also of the gaps in its own capacity to provide emergency shelter. Drawing on its years of experience in promoting disaster preparedness and response, IFRC had agreed to assume a global convening role in the provision of emergency shelter. Very recently, its Governing Board had ratified the memorandum of understanding signed by its Secretary General and the United Nations Emergency Relief Coordinator, cementing the Federation's leadership of the shelter aspect of natural disasters.

64. In fulfilling that role, IFRC would uphold the Fundamental Principles of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement, in particular that of independence. It would also focus on building an even closer relationship with UN-Habitat to ensure that, in meeting people's emergency shelter needs, the two organizations were also laying the groundwork for the recovery of their communities into the future. IFRC was also seeking to deepen its collaboration with national and local authorities. Governments had a primary responsibility for preparing and assisting people living in human settlements, for example by enforcing building codes and regulations to ensure that settlements could physically withstand the impact of a natural disaster, or by paying timely attention to land titling issues, following a disaster, in order to facilitate the building of both transitional and permanent homes. Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, as key actors in national disaster preparedness programmes, could advise Governments on those important policy questions.

65. The challenges of human settlements were closely related to community health issues. In many countries, Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies were initiating special programmes to address the community health needs of people living in the most impoverished human settlements, from water and sanitation programmes to immunization campaigns. The Foundation's more than 97 million volunteers provided the expertise and community access necessary to implement those life-saving programmes. They also helped to create an urgently needed culture of prevention, in terms both of disaster preparedness and of preventive health measures.

66. **Mr. Khan** (Pakistan) said that the report *State of the World's Cities 2006/7* had documented the deteriorating living standards of the urban poor, particularly with respect to health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS and other diseases. More than half the world's poor would live in cities by 2007, and much more should be done to achieve significant improvements in the lives of 100 million slum-dwellers by 2002. Pro-poor policies and access to affordable housing were needed more than ever, and would require an integrated approach to human settlement development and to water and sanitation. It would be necessary to expand the provision of technical assistance to developing countries, identify disaster-prone areas and formulate mitigation strategies, and provide sustained technical assistance for reconstruction.

67. Pakistan was faced with serious challenges relating to urbanization, including an acute shortage of housing and overcrowding. The Government had taken a number of measures to address the problem, including upgrading and regularizing slums, involving local communities in the development of physical infrastructures, establishing new housing projects for middle and low-income population sectors and encouraging the private sector to invest in housing. It was also making improvements to urban transport systems and to water supply and sanitation systems, and participated in the relevant regional and international initiatives.

68 The devastating earthquake that had struck parts of northern Pakistan and Azad Kashmir in 2005 had left 3.5 million people without shelter. Although 90 per cent of the displaced had been relocated to transitional shelters, some 40,000 people still lived in tented communities, and Pakistan was therefore accelerating its reconstruction and rehabilitation efforts, in partnership with the international community. However, UN-Habitat should increase its participation in the long-term rehabilitation process.

69. Although overall contributions to UN-Habitat had risen to $47.1 million in 2005, non-earmarked contributions remained low, at $10.5 million. That imbalance should be rectified, as it could hamper strategic planning and the timely and predictable delivery of services. Furthermore, UN-Habitat should be strengthened through the creation of an effective balance between its normative and operational activities. It was also essential to improve interagency cooperation in the area of human settlements and other crosscutting issues, and UN-Habitat would benefit from inclusion in the United Nations Development Group. Pakistan remained committed to implementing its commitments on human settlements under Agenda 21, the decisions of the Johannesburg Programme of Implementation and the 2005 World Summit Outcome.

70. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) welcomed the recognition, in the Secretary-General's report (A/61/262), that several low or middle-income States were starting to stabilize or reverse slum growth rates. Colombia had succeeded in controlling the formation of marginal neighbourhoods through a number of measures, included planned urban development and growth and expanded social investment with a view to generating better economic and employment opportunities in the poorest urban areas. If the right policies and practices were implemented, it was possible to prevent the formation of such neighbourhoods in any country, regardless of its wealth.

71. The Secretary-General's report also referred to the resources mobilized by UN-Habitat to finance projects, including World Bank mechanisms. Regional financial institutions could also play an effective role in that area. In Colombia, for example, the Inter-American Development Bank had sponsored a study that would provide the basis for strengthening certain urban housing programmes.

72. The Johannesburg Plan of Implementation and the decisions of the eleventh session of the Commission on Sustainable Development were the main frame of reference for addressing issues such as water, basic sanitation and human settlements. Ensuring the right to water and housing was essential to the achievement of sustainable development,

eradication of poverty and reduction of inequity. States had a responsibility to promote and facilitate access to public services in areas with limited resources and to pursue comprehensive policies aimed at improving the economic and social conditions of communities marginalized by development progress. It was equally essential to gain access to the expertise, financial resources and technical support of the various institutions working in the areas of urban and rural development and on social issues, including at the international level.

73. The investments made by developing countries in those areas must be substantial and must be given the same degree of priority as investments in education, health, citizens' security and transport. It was also of critical importance to increase the flow of resources to developing countries. Donor countries should increase their ODA to developing nations, in accordance with the Millennium Declaration and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, and it was essential to transfer technology to developing countries and promote national institutional capacities. South-South cooperation on water, sanitation and human settlements was also of key importance. Lastly, Colombia endorsed the special call made to UN-Habitat to monitor closely the fulfilment of goals relating to human settlements, in particular the relevant international cooperation commitments.

74. **Ms. Halliyadde** (Sri Lanka) said that the urban poor were the most disempowered social sector with respect to access to health and education and the most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS and other diseases. They also reflected the world's collective failure to come to terms with rapid urbanization and the consequences of globalization. In order to achieve the sustained development of human settlements, housing and environmental protection, it was essential to establish a strong democracy.

75. Although it was too early to judge the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II), it had a number of positive aspects. The time had come to review and appraise the progress made in the implementation of Habitat II, identify obstacles and emerging issues, and set out future plans of action for implementing the Habitat Agenda.

76. Sri Lanka had introduced the necessary policies and laws to ensure the right to adequate shelter, which was constitutionally guaranteed. The Government had pledged to provide 65,000 housing units for those presently living in unauthorized and temporary dwellings in the city of Colombo, in keeping with the Millennium Development Goals. It was also taking steps to increase its national housing stock by promoting private/public partnerships, encouraging individual house builders, relocating slum and shanty dwellers, and implementing special housing programmes for targeted groups.

77. There should be a greater global partnership for cooperation in the areas of financial and technical assistance to strengthen the capacities of developing countries to address the growing problems relating to human settlements development in an increasingly urbanized world. In order to achieve the common objectives of the Habitat Agenda, there was a need for a fair and regular flow of assistance to developing countries. Sri Lanka was committed not only to implementing the Agenda, but also to consolidating its solidarity with all Member States that wished to redefine international cooperation in the context of rapidly expanding urbanization and globalization.

78. **Mr. Abreha** (Ethiopia) said that, although only 16 per cent of Ethiopia's population lived in urban areas, urbanization was occurring more rapidly than overall population growth, and the urban population was expected to double by 2020. The urban population included a high proportion of slum-dwellers, but Ethiopia could learn from the good practices of other developing countries to halt and reverse the formation of slums by anticipating and planning for growing urban populations. It would continue to cooperate very closely with UN-Habitat to address the challenges posed by the large number of slum-dwellers.

79. Given the urgent significance of urbanized poverty, it was important to focus on achieving the Millennium Development Goals, including the target of improving the lives of at least 100 million slum-dwellers by 2020, and more generally on finding a practical and sustainable solution to the global fight against poverty. Ethiopia had made the achievement of integrated urbanization one of its main development objectives, and realized that developing countries could achieve the Goals only by allocating far greater resources to poverty reduction and to improving living standards in a sustainable manner. The Government had consistently promoted home ownership for low-income groups and had allocated part of its regular budget to shelter provision, infrastructure development,

policy formulation and capacity-building. It had launched an integrated housing development programme in large and medium-sized cities for middle and low-income households. Under the programme, the Government would finance the construction of 100,000 of the total 225,000 new housing units needed each year between 2005 and 2015.

80. UN-Habitat was to be commended for the partnerships it had formed with various stakeholders to achieve the goals outlined in the Habitat Agenda. His country was particularly encouraged by the partnerships with the African Development Bank and the Asian Development Bank, and urged UN-Habitat and other partners to support its efforts to tackle the challenges of urbanization and achieve the slum-upgrading and water and sanitation targets of the Millennium Declaration.

*The meeting rose at 5.25 p.m.*

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## Second Committee

**Summary record of the 23rd meeting**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 30 October 2006, at 10 a.m.

*Chairperson*: Ms. Intelmann ..... (Estonia)

## Contents

Agenda item 53: Sustainable development

(e) Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa

Agenda item 57: Eradication of poverty and other development issues

(b) Industrial development cooperation

Agenda item 118: Programme planning

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.*

**Agenda item 53: Sustainable development**

**(e) Implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa**
(A/61/225)

1. **Mr. Diallo** (Executive Secretary, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification), introducing the report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and/or Desertification, Particularly in Africa (A/61/225, sect. II), drew attention to the fact that its main thrust was the outcome of the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention, held in October 2005, and the celebration of the International Year of Deserts and Desertification. On the subject of the Convention's collaboration with the Global Environment Facility (GEF), he said that at its session in December 2006, the Council of GEF would be considering the amendment of the GEF Instrument to reflect the designation of GEF as a financial mechanism of the Convention. The Conference of the Parties had adopted the Convention budget for the biennium 2006-2007, together with specific measures to reduce the risk of budget loss due to currency fluctuations.

2. The year 2006 marked not only the tenth anniversary of the Convention's entry into force but also the International Year of Deserts and Desertification, in honour of which there had been a number of major international events. The Beijing International Conference on Women and Desertification in May-June 2006 had been attended by more than 100 participants from approximately 50 countries and had adopted a statement addressing the priorities for action, including water and resource management, food security, health and education. The International Conference on Youth and Desertification, held in Bamako, Mali, in September 2006, had called on Governments to ensure full involvement of young people in the management of natural resources and to make youth employment an urgent priority. A symposium, held in Almeria, Spain, in October 2006, had examined the link between land degradation, poverty and forced migration, which was becoming an increasingly topical and urgent issue worldwide.

3. Other events scheduled for the International Year were a round-table discussion, to be held in New York in November 2006, on identifying the challenges ahead and new and innovative approaches to dealing with them in order to enhance implementation of the Convention in a rapidly changing world; an international film festival, to be held in Rome in December 2006; and a forum to be held in Arusha, Tanzania, also in December 2006, at which the Convention and the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) would be working together on linkages between climate change and desertification. He expressed his gratitude to the honorary spokespersons for the International Year for their support and encouragement.

4. At the suggestion of the Government of Argentina, the fifth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention had been deferred and would now be held in Buenos Aires from 7 to 22 March 2007. Its focus would be on implementation in regions other than Africa, and on selected global issues. In recent months, the secretariat of the Convention had been mobilizing assistance in elaborating national reports for countries from the Asian, Latin American and Caribbean, and Central and Eastern European regions. The GEF Council had made financial resources available to the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to provide capacity-building for national progress reports on implementation of the Convention and awareness-raising efforts on sustainable land management in 90 countries in those regions. The World Bank and the Governments of Germany and Italy had also contributed.

5. The work programme of the fifth session of the Committee for the Review of the Implementation of the Convention would have a two-pronged approach: review of implementation in Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, the Northern Mediterranean and Central and Eastern Europe, focusing on information on the seven thematic issues identified by the Conference of the Parties; and consideration of selected issues that had global relevance, such as necessary adjustments to the elaboration process and the implementation of action programmes, mobilization and use of financial resources, promotion of the transfer of know-how and

technology, and procedures for communication of information. The session would submit a comprehensive report to the eighth session of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in Madrid in October 2007.

6. He was pleased to report that more and more developing countries were supporting implementation of the Convention, and sometimes with efforts that had not been witnessed before. He singled out the voluntary contribution of Venezuela in assisting implementation in the African, Asian (South Pacific), and Latin American and Caribbean regions. He said that never before had there been such a level of generosity from a developing country, and he encouraged other developing nations that had the possibilities to follow suit. The time had come to recognize that there would be no sustainable development on the planet unless full attention was paid to the Convention, which was an instrument whose implementation contributed to the achievement of the objectives of the other two sister Rio Conventions.

7. **Mr. González** (Venezuela) said that desertification was a global problem and should be addressed by the international community as a matter of urgency; if it was not reversed, agricultural production would be affected, causing malnutrition and hunger. The Convention played a significant role for his country in terms of its own policy instruments and international cooperation; Venezuela had given US$ 5 million in the past five years for the development of environmental recovery programmes in Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific.

8. South-South cooperation would meet the needs of the countries of the South in terms of a strategy for development, better harnessing their synergies and allowing for improved management of natural resources. It was the developing countries that were most affected by the harmful consequences of environmental degradation, which were due to unbridled and unscrupulous industrial development. Venezuela called on developed countries to renew their commitment to the Convention, and underlined the importance of providing financial and logistical resources to ensure compliance with its provisions. All countries — and especially the developed countries — must meet their commitments to assign adequate resources for combating poverty, which would strengthen institution-building in developing countries and implement regional cooperation bodies under the Convention.

9. **Mr. Anadeu** (Nigeria) asked whether from the secretariat's point of view, satisfactory progress had been made towards making GEF a financial mechanism of the Convention. He also asked the secretariat to provide an explanation of what was meant by the Green Belt Initiative, as many of his colleagues from regions other than Africa did not know what it was.

10. **Mr. Idd** (Somalia) said that desertification was a global issue that called for partnership between developing and developed countries. His delegation had very serious concerns regarding the lack of resources provided to the Convention secretariat by the international community, but it welcomed what had been achieved with that low level of resources.

11. **Mr. Diallo** (Executive Secretary, United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification), noting the comment made by the representative of Somalia, agreed with the representative of Venezuela that there was merit in urging developing countries to share their experiences — of whatever kind — with one another and to provide each other support. Some three years ago, the secretariat of the Convention had had discussions with Gulf countries, particularly Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, on sharing experiences in date palm cultivation with other developing countries, especially in Africa and Asia. The secretariat was grateful for the timely support of Venezuela, and hoped that it was the beginning of a trend in which other developing countries in a position to provide support, as well as developed countries and international organizations, would come forward to assist in the implementation of the Convention, either within existing frameworks or in other ways.

12. As for his views on the prospects for further cooperation with GEF, he told the representative of Nigeria that he believed that GEF now had a clear political mandate to provide support for implementation of the Convention, and that the GEF secretariat would be encouraged to move ahead in that area. Pending the availability of additional bilateral support, GEF should be asked to do more than it had been doing in the past. He was very optimistic that the implementing agencies, which had representation on the ground and knew exactly what was needed in the countries concerned, would help GEF to identify and implement activities that were within its mandate. He

was looking forward to the December 2006 meeting of the GEF Council, which would be considering the proposal to amend the GEF Instrument so as to reflect designation of GEF as a financing mechanism of the Convention.

13. As for the question concerning the Green Belt proposal, which had been submitted by the President of Nigeria and endorsed by the African Union, he explained that the idea behind the Initiative was to identify a number of complementary activities to help Africa meet the problems of land degradation head on. In Africa, combating desertification was the number one priority in the environment component of the New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD). He was confident that the African Union would soon be in a position to submit to its partners the specific elements that could be used to implement the initiative.

14. **The Chairperson** invited the Committee to engage in a general discussion on the item.

15. **Ms. Zia** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that human and climatic factors combined were turning fertile soil into barren patches of land. There was widespread poverty in areas affected by desertification and land degradation. Despite the consensuses in Johannesburg that the Convention to Combat Desertification should be an important tool for poverty eradication, the international community still failed to pay sufficient attention to the problem. The Group of 77 and China were concerned that desertification had not been mentioned even once in the report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization (A/61/1). The international community should make desertification a priority, particularly since 2006 had been designated the International Year of Deserts and Desertification (General Assembly resolution 58/211).

16. Greater efforts were required to mitigate the risks of desertification and serious droughts arising from poor land management, the impact of climate change and the loss of biodiversity. There was an urgent need for strategic guidance and targets in order to foster implementation of the Convention. The report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of the Convention stressed the need to "engage the international community in setting benchmarks and defining indicators for progress, and to make the Convention a centre of excellence in scientific and technical knowledge and best practices" (A/61/225, sect. II, para. 7). Greater access by the affected developing countries to financial resources and technology transfer would be crucial to the success of the Convention. GEF should be the financial mechanism for the Convention and should work with countries to build capacity that would facilitate their access to funding. Compliance with the Convention would support developing countries' efforts to eradicate poverty.

17. **Mr. Mbuende** (Namibia) said that for his country, implementation of the Convention to Combat Desertification was a matter of life and death, since Namibia was home to both the Namib desert in the west and the Kalahari in the east, making it one of the driest countries in sub-Saharan Africa. His Government had to manage the country's fragile ecology while taking measures to curb desertification. High climatic variability and widespread deforestation, overgrazing and rangeland deterioration all posed risks of desertification. Those risks were exacerbated by illegal trade in desert plants.

18. Desertification had made the Namibian people more vulnerable to frequent droughts, which led to losses of stock and lower grain production. Droughts were especially devastating for the poorest farmers and rural communities, whose food security depended on rain-fed cereal crops. His Government was combating desertification by promoting the sustainable development of natural resources that were suited to the country's environment. Because all Namibians depended directly or indirectly on natural resources, the Government was working to safeguard those resources and implement its national development plans. To help restore the ecology, it supported communal land boards and promoted land-based livelihoods.

19. Integrated ecosystem management strategies were needed that would address the underlying causes of land degradation. Government ministries and non-governmental organizations were establishing a national programme known as the Country Pilot Partnership for Integrated Sustainable Land Management. GEF, which supported that programme, was doing an excellent job and should be given more resources.

20. Research and training were key components in combating desertification. Substantial resources had

been put into training on community-based natural resource management, which helped diversify livelihoods on marginal land. Promoting sustainable resource management at the community level would allow Namibia to combat desertification, reduce poverty and promote good governance. As part of that effort, the Gobabeb Training and Research Centre, which had been involved in community-based programmes and environmental research and education, had been transformed into a Southern African Development Community Centre of Excellence for training and research.

21. His delegation welcomed the close cooperation between the secretariats of the Convention to Combat Desertification and the Commission on Sustainable Development, which would facilitate coordination between them. He looked forward to the 2008 and 2009 sessions of the Commission, which would take up thematic clusters on agriculture, rural development, land, drought and desertification.

22. During the third GEF replenishment period, his Government had made good progress towards achieving some of the targets of multilateral environment agreements and the Millennium Development Goals, particularly the goal of ensuring environmental sustainability. Nevertheless, it still faced many challenges. Namibia was highly vulnerable to the impact of climate change, particularly in coastal areas. It also had to deal with the problem of its dependency on a fragile ecosystem and an economy based largely on subsistence agriculture and livestock production. GEF and its partners should develop accelerated approaches to climate change adaptation. It was disappointing therefore that the fourth replenishment round had not secured sufficient funds, while the number of projects had increased drastically. The General Assembly should support the new leadership of the Global Environment Facility to ensure its reform as an important funding mechanism.

23. Namibia noted with interest the call by GEF to adopt and begin implementing the Resource Allocation Framework for the focal areas of climate change and biodiversity. Every effort should be made, however, to ensure that such undertakings did not place additional burdens or limitations on developing countries. His Government's long-term plan depended on a partnership aimed at the wise use and management of environmental resources in the short, medium and long terms. The Resource Allocation Framework placed great emphasis on short-term planning, which was unsustainable and lacked strategic vision. Development partners should mobilize additional resources to support implementation of the Convention.

24. **Mr. Anadeu** (Nigeria) said that desertification was a particular problem in his country and region, but was also a global problem. His delegation therefore supported the secretariat's work on enhancing synergies between the Convention to Combat Desertification and other international conventions. GEF should be made the financial mechanism of the Convention.

25. His delegation appreciated the wide range and scope of activities carried out by the secretariat during the International Year of Deserts and Desertification. His Government had launched activities to enhance awareness of the issue and expand local capacities. Under a national framework to combat desertification, "economic trees" had been planted to increase reforestation. Local communities had been given incentives to enhance their economic well-being through tree-planting. "Green Belt" activities had been initiated across Africa through NEPAD.

26. Insufficient resources had been allocated for the projects already under way. Resources for sustainable land management must be increased. Desertification should be shown the same level of concern as the other conventions; it was not fair that 80 per cent of resources should go to two conventions while all the other conventions combined, including the one on desertification, received only 20 per cent of resources.

27. His delegation approved of the secretariat's review of the implementation of the Convention in Latin America. The reporting process that took place in African countries should be reproduced in other regions. International resources were needed in the form of both financial and technical assistance. Without such assistance, capacity could not be built. He hoped that adequate attention and resources would be devoted to the issue of desertification in 2007 and 2008.

28. **Mr. Mansour** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the international community should continue making the utmost efforts on the issues of desertification and land degradation by addressing their root causes and their impacts on development, poverty, deforestation, health, environmental sustainability, agriculture and even migration. It should consider the far-reaching

implications of desertification for sustainable development.

29. Although many governments as well as regional and international organizations were working on the problem of desertification, it was necessary to launch studies on the root causes and, in turn, the reciprocal impact of desertification on those causes. The global dimensions of desertification, including the incremental costs and global benefits of combating it, should also be examined. If that were to happen, the international community would mobilize more human and financial resources to address the problem.

30. Combating desertification was not the only way to deal with deserts. Coexisting with deserts was also a feasible way of life and should be part of the measures considered. Many lessons in that regard could be learned from the experiences of indigenous people and local communities, in other words, from people who lived in the desert and used natural resources in an environmentally sustainable manner. Much could be learned from the ways in which local communities managed scarce water resources from basin to consumption. Civil societies, including non-governmental organizations, community-based organizations, the private sector, academics and the public should be engaged in raising awareness about the desert and combating desertification.

31. He called for greater involvement by organizations and agencies within the United Nations system, as well as scientific research and the transfer of appropriate, environmentally sound advanced technologies. Monitoring and early warning mechanisms should be established in deserts. The results of studies and monitoring activities, as well as measures for fixation of sand dunes, should be made available to people living in dry areas. Greater emphasis should be placed on formulating or implementing national action plans, while adequate and predictable financial resources should be allocated to support the implementation of those plans.

32. **Mr. Manor** (Israel) said that desertification, or land degradation in drylands, had emerged as one of the planet's most acute environmental problems. A decade after the inception of the Convention, it was time to evaluate the progress made. To that end, an international conference entitled "Deserts and Desertification: Challenges and Opportunities" would be convened in his country in early November 2006. The conference would emphasize the distinction between desert and desertification and would consider its technological policy and economic implications. The conference was meant to be relevant to scientists and government officials as well as practitioners and local communities based in drylands.

33. The first day of the conference would be dedicated to the challenge of sustainable living in drylands. On the second day, participants would explore the indirect causes of desertification as well as their interaction with the direct biophysical causes. The third day would be devoted to field trips to communities that had attempted to derive economic benefits from desert conditions, and on the final day, participants would consider the practical aspects of projects designed to provide sustainable livelihoods in drylands or to combat desertification.

34. **Mr. Seyni** (Niger) said that his country was particularly concerned about desertification, given that it was a landlocked country two thirds of whose surface was arid or desert land. Official statistics showed that the Niger lost some 100,000 hectares of forest annually due to drought and firewood collection. Loss of natural resources and soil degradation ensued, leading in turn to lower productivity, food insecurity and poverty. To cope with the effects of desertification, his Government had developed national plans and programmes aimed at combating desertification, managing and protecting natural resources and achieving sustainable development. It had created a National Environmental Council for Sustainable Development to implement the national plan on sustainable development and the environment, focusing on land restoration and conservation, integrated management of water resources, capacity-building in monitoring desertification and drought, public involvement, strong partnerships and a long-term vision for tackling environmental problems.

35. The country's national independence day had also been declared a national arbour day on which people across the country planted trees. The Government had plans to use the country's rich coal deposits not only to produce electricity but also to substitute for wood as a household energy source. Pilot projects for land recovery had already had some success and were being extended and intensified.

36. Nevertheless, the Niger was not able to combat desertification on its own; greater international

cooperation was crucial. His Government was grateful for the help it received through the bilateral, regional and international agreements it had signed, but also made an urgent appeal to the international community, and developed countries in particular, to lend greater support to its efforts to combat desertification. Without that support, the Niger could not hope to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals and objectives.

37. **Mr. Wang** Qi (China) said that desertification was the common responsibility of the international community and posed a long-term challenge to developing countries. Financial and technological input was indispensable to the task of combating desertification and implementing the Convention. From a global perspective, mechanisms for technological transfer should be actively pursued in order to facilitate the implementation of the Convention. The fight against desertification also called for all stakeholders to fulfil their respective roles and responsibilities. Governments should formulate appropriate policies and legislation, and private sector initiative should muster the necessary level of financial and technological support.

38. China was among the countries most seriously affected by desertification, and the Government had adopted a series of measures to implement the Convention. While some success had been achieved in curbing the expansion of deserts, resulting in economic and social development and the improvement of the environment, approximately 27.5 per cent of China's total land area was still affected by desertification. The Government would intensify its efforts to channel financial input into preventive measures and ecological construction. The scale and quality of national efforts would be enhanced by placing greater focus on the integrated use of scientific means and legislative measures, as well as broader national participation and expanded international cooperation.

39. China had shared the benefit of its experience in combating desertification through the training of technicians from developing countries, and had hosted an international conference on women and desertification.

40. **Mr. Ito** (Japan) said that, among other things, Japan had hosted an international symposium on desertification in response to the call on States to undertake special initiatives in observance of the International Year of Deserts and Desertification. The symposium on drylands had concluded that comprehensive research was urgently needed, and stressed the importance of an integrated approach to combating desertification — one that included socio-economic policies, such as health and sanitation, and made use of the full range of climate- and biology-related data available. Japan had designed a website on the International Year of Deserts and Desertification to help raise public awareness of global desertification issues.

41. He expressed appreciation to Mr. Diello for his tribute to the late Mr. Ryutaro Hashimoto, former Prime Minister of Japan and Honorary Spokesman for the International Year of Deserts and Desertification, and to Member States for their efforts to combat the phenomenon. Lastly, he urged the international community to redouble its efforts to halt the progress of desertification and the threat to human security that it created.

42. **Mr. Silva** (Cape Verde) pointed out that poverty was a cause and consequence of desertification, and that halting land degradation would be crucial to poverty eradication. His delegation therefore remained puzzled by the discrepancy between the scope of desertification and the resources allocated to it. Desertification simply did not attract a level of attention commensurate with its negative social and economic and environmental consequences. He therefore welcomed the upcoming round-table discussions that were aimed at identifying innovative solutions to enhancing the implementation of the Convention within policy frameworks such as NEPAD. In Africa, the disruptive effects of drought and desertification were becoming apparent in areas such as forced migration, health and conflict.

43. The African countries were doing their utmost to solve their problems, but could not make further progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals without continued international support. He echoed the appeal to GEF to ensure the equitable distribution of greater resources to land degradation issues, and urged the Convention secretariat to create additional synergies with other Rio Convention secretariats, GEF and other international organizations and agencies.

44. Cape Verde welcomed the offers by Algeria and Israel to host international events to commemorate the

International Year of Deserts and Desertification, and all other initiatives taken by member States. At the national level, the Government and civil society of Cape Verde had organized a number of activities, including workshops and seminars.

45. **Mr. Mofadal** (Sudan) said that, even though desertification had been recognized as a major economic, social and environmental problem since 1977 and despite the efforts made since the signing of the Convention, desertification was still a source of great concern, particularly in Africa. His delegation appreciated the decision by the Conference of the Parties to establish an ad hoc intergovernmental intersessional working group to study the report of the Joint Inspection Unit and prepare a 10-year strategic plan to enhance implementation of the Convention, as it would indeed help enhance international efforts to address the diverse challenges of desertification in a concerted manner.

46. The Sudan had been suffering from drought and desertification for over three decades. The total area of forests — over a third of the country in the 1950s — had been progressively shrinking. The rate of deforestation and desertification was almost 29 times the rate of forestation. Many of those forests had been depleted to meet the growing demand for fuelwood, timber and agricultural land. The problem had been further exacerbated by rapid population growth, declining economic growth, civil war, the influx of refugees from neighbouring countries and growing livestock numbers. The spread of poverty and weak utilization of environmentally-friendly energy sources also played a significant role.

47. Since 1976, the country had been formulating national programmes to address drought and desertification. The Quarter Century Development Strategy (2002-2027) linked desertification to poverty, food insecurity and environmental degradation. Natural resource development focused on soil conservation and increasing forested areas, while the strategy on the use of energy sources was based on environmental conservation, economic and efficient energy use, and alternative and renewable energy sources.

48. At the regional level, the Sudan was a founding member of the organization now known as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), which was tasked with enhancing regional cooperation on food security and environmental protection, economic cooperation, and political and humanitarian affairs. The efforts of IGAD and its partners had culminated in the 2005 Comprehensive Peace Agreement, which had been motivated by the conviction that peace was the first step to combating drought and desertification.

49. One of the lessons learned by IGAD was that drought and desertification could not be addressed effectively in isolation from other economic, social and political factors. Addressing the root causes of underdevelopment was essential to combating drought and desertification in developing countries. The efforts of the secretariat of the Convention, the Conference of the Parties, the Commission on Sustainable Development and other stakeholders — while appreciated — would be most effective if part of a comprehensive holistic approach that addressed obstacles to sustainable development at all levels. Another lesson learned by IGAD was that regional and subregional organizations could play a significant role in solving the problems of their respective regions if they were supported by other stakeholders in the international community.

50. **Ms. von Lilien-Waldau** (International Fund for Agricultural Development), speaking on behalf also of the Global Mechanism of the Convention, said that one fifth of the world's population and over 100 countries were affected by desertification and land degradation, which, according to the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment, was one of the most critical problems affecting ecosystems today. The fate of poor communities and fragile drylands were intimately interrelated, with poverty being a cause and consequence of land degradation and desertification. Global goals for poverty reduction and environmental goods could be reached only by addressing desertification more rigorously. Recognizing that, the Heads of State and Government gathered at the 2005 World Summit had unanimously called for implementation of the Convention to be strengthened.

51. While the challenges loomed large, IFAD, particularly through its collaboration with the Global Mechanism and GEF, was committed to building on existing momentum to help bring to scale the response needed to achieve lasting results for the people living with the threat or reality of desertification. Approximately 70 per cent of IFAD-supported projects were located in ecologically fragile environments. The Fund's position was further reinforced through its status as a GEF Executing Agency, and as host of the

Global Mechanism, which had sharpened its focus on land degradation and significantly increased resources for the Convention's implementation.

52. IFAD had invested over $3.5 billion in areas affected by land degradation. Around 7 per cent of its lending programme was spent on land degradation activities directly linked to national action programmes under the Convention. The Fund's collaboration with the Global Mechanism had been instrumental in leveraging additional funding from GEF and other co-financing sources. The Fund strongly affirmed the Global Mechanism's role in overall resource mobilization for the implementation of the Convention.

53. According to a recent IFAD/Global Mechanism review, the share of IFAD programmes and projects that related to the Convention's objectives had increased from 34 per cent to 55 per cent between 2002 and 2004. Continuing collaboration between IFAD and the Global Mechanism was expected to lead to further mainstreaming of the Convention in IFAD programmes, better reporting of Convention-related activities and more effective replication.

54. The Beijing International Conference on Women and Desertification had been a particularly important event for the International Year of Deserts and Desertification. IFAD supported the recommendations adopted at the Conference and encouraged their timely implementation. Based on its experience, IFAD would encourage broader and more significant support for the Convention's commitment to strengthen the role of women at all levels of implementation. In that regard, a publication on gender and desertification had been made available for Committee members.

55. Efforts to combat desertification and mitigate the effects of drought were more urgent than ever. Recalling the decision by the Conference of the Parties to establish an ad hoc intergovernmental intersessional working group to develop a 10-year strategic plan and framework to enhance the implementation of the Convention, she said that that plan must build on lessons learned and experience gained in the 10 years since the Convention's adoption. When developing the plan, account should also be taken of the following useful insights of the recent IFAD/Global Mechanism review: the Convention's objectives should be mainstreamed in national and regional development and poverty reduction strategies; the mainstreaming of sustainable land management at the country level should include a strengthening of the voice and capacity of affected communities and ensure that their engagement was sustained over the long term; a better understanding was needed of the interrelationship between desertification and vulnerability; much more should be done to promote synergies between national strategic frameworks and the Rio Conventions; and reporting needed to be improved significantly.

56. The Convention's emphasis on grass-roots initiatives set it apart from other international treaties. The role of Governments, donors and development agencies was to identify partnerships and mobilize resources to link the rural poor with the tools they needed to prosper, thereby enabling them to build lives characterized by dignity instead of deprivation. Both IFAD and the Global Mechanism were committed to the Convention and would continue to work with their partners to achieve its goals.

**Agenda item 57: Eradication of poverty and other development issues**

**(b) Industrial development cooperation** (A/61/305)

57. **Mr. Yumkella** (Director-General, United Nations Industrial Development Organization) said that, since its establishment in 1966, UNIDO had evolved into a more effective and responsive organization. As part of its far-reaching programme of reform and revitalization, in place since the mid-1990s, UNIDO had cut its staff from 1,400 to around 700, while raising its technical cooperation delivery from $57 million in 1998 to $128 million in 2005. Moreover, it had closely aligned its programmes and activities with internationally agreed development goals; sharpened the focus of its work in selected areas of its core expertise; improved its delivery modality through integrated packages of services; promoted innovative partnerships and joint programmes with an increasing number of United Nations organizations and other development partners; and pioneered a new approach to field representation and collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) to promote greater coherence at the country level. Those positive changes had been noted by UNIDO member States, the General Assembly, in its resolution 59/249, and by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development, which, in an independent study of 23 international organizations conducted in 2004, had ranked UNIDO sixth overall and first in the group of five specialized agencies.

58. Turning to his report (contained in A/61/305), he said that there was encouraging and less encouraging news in today's global industrial landscape. On the positive side, he mentioned developing countries' share of global manufacturing (about one quarter) and global trade in manufactures (around one third); the steady growth in South-South trade in commodities and manufactures; and the industrial landscape's gradual shift towards a new pattern of global interdependence along the traditional North-South axis and, increasingly, a South-South axis. On the less positive side, he mentioned sub-Saharan Africa's very small share in world industrial output; its declining share in South-South manufactured exports, total exports, and medium- and high-technology exports; and the slow pace of growth in intraregional trade. The countries that had been most successful in raising incomes and reducing poverty — China and the newly industrialized countries — offered a good example of how to move ahead. They had significantly increased their manufacturing value added and developed into global players in trade in manufactured goods.

59. Notwithstanding its importance to poverty eradication, rapid economic growth brought with it social and environmental costs. The major challenges posed by widening income inequalities, regional disparities, urban migration, strains on social services, natural resource depletion and environmental degradation needed to be addressed if economic growth was to be sustainable and political stability secured. For UNIDO, the key to sustainable wealth creation was a pro-poor growth strategy, as described in the report (para. 16). The report also gave details on how UNIDO was contributing to that strategy through its support programmes for private sector development (para. 44).

60. In the past year, he had engaged directly with Government leaders and private sector development experts in almost every region. The issues under discussion today were particularly important for countries in crisis or recovering from crisis. Some of those countries had high numbers of unemployed youth who desperately needed a decent job. The international community must accept that poverty alleviation was not possible without wealth creation, through the establishment of a strong private sector. From his conversations, he sensed that Africa wanted to go beyond assistance and be part of the global trading system. Discussions about poverty therefore needed to focus less on basket weaving and more on enterprises that could supply baskets on a large scale, while discussions about health, in particular malaria, needed to look at how to help African countries add value to their cotton by producing mosquito nets themselves, rather than buying them from elsewhere. One African Minister had told him that Africans were no longer content with being taught how to fish; they wanted to learn how to make the fishing rod itself. That capacity to apply science and technology to productive activities was key to making poor countries a real part of the global value chain.

61. Returning to the issue of job creation for young people, he said that 15- to 24-year-olds accounted for only about a quarter of the working-age population, but nearly half of the world's unemployed. For various reasons, they were at a distinct disadvantage when it came to finding a job, particularly in developing countries. UNIDO was, therefore, teaming up with the African Union, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for West Africa, the Youth Employment Network and the International Labour Organization (ILO) to forge a concerted and coordinated approach to youth employment, particularly in West Africa.

62. UNIDO activities in the field of rural energy, such as the Initiative on Rural Energy for Productive Use or the partnership with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in the area of biofuels were aimed at creating employment and generating income, while reducing emissions, deforestation, land degradation and pollution. The September 2006 Iberian Ministerial Meeting on energy security in the Latin American region — organized by UNIDO, in cooperation with the Ibero-American Secretariat (SEGIB) and Uruguay's Ministry of Industry, Energy and Mining — had led to the establishment of a Regional Observatory for Renewable Energy, which would promote information-sharing on energy matters and develop projects and programmes in the field. It was hoped that in 2007 Brazil would host a conference on renewable energies and Malaysia would convene a meeting on palm oil-based biofuel.

63. UNIDO also gave small- and medium-scale industries advice and assistance on cleaner production methods, assisting industries in reducing water withdrawals and pollution and promoting water reuse and recycling, and offering integrated management programmes for marine ecosystems. Most of those

programmes were financed by GEF and conducted in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and UNDP.

64. UNIDO — one of the leading agencies for the implementation of multilateral environmental agreements and conventions — had become the second largest United Nations agency for the implementation of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer and had been entrusted with a significant share of national implementation plans under the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. It currently assisted some 40 States, including China and India.

65. Another major challenge was how to make trade work better for the poor. The fact that many countries had failed to reap significant benefits from the new opportunities offered by the global trading system was not always due to tariff and non-tariff barriers. Other factors included lack of productive capacity, inability to prove conformity with international standards and the problems faced when integrating into the multilateral trading system. Developing countries currently had to meet over 100,000 product and process standards in order to access foreign markets. UNIDO had received and continued to receive significant support in that regard from the European Commission and individual European Union member States.

66. South-South cooperation also presented a great opportunity for sharing experiences. Countries that had made significant progress on poverty alleviation had done so through a strong push for private sector development, trade and technology transfer. Such experiences were relevant for other regions. For that reason, UNIDO had embarked on a South-South industrial cooperation initiative, which had already received $6.5 million from China and India and indications of support from other emerging economies such as Brazil. Malaysia's palm oil biofuel initiative, for example, was particularly relevant to West Africa, where palm oil originated. The only difference between them was that Malaysia had successfully applied science and technology to produce palm oil products that could now be exported to the rest of the world.

67. As noted in the report (para. 75), UNIDO also work closely with NEPAD, where the focus was on productive capacity. It was important to look beyond trade preferences. Countries needed the capacity to produce products in the right quantity, of the right quality and at a competitive price in order to effectively engage in the global trading system. That was the way to genuinely address poverty alleviation.

68. In its 40 years of existence, UNIDO had learned that it was important to remain relevant and responsive to the new realities and requirements of its member States. By bearing that lesson in mind, UNIDO hoped to continue serving them in the years ahead.

**Agenda item 118: Programme planning** (A/61/6 (Prog.7), A/61/16 and A/C.2/61/5)

69. **The Chairperson** recalled that the General Assembly, at its second plenary meeting, had allocated the current agenda item to all the Main Committees and to the plenary. In a letter dated 12 October, the President of the General Assembly had drawn his attention to the recommendation made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination, in paragraph 120 of its report (A/61/16), to allocate subprogramme 1 of programme 7, Economic and Social Affairs, of the proposed strategic framework for the period 2008-2009 to the Second Committee for its review and action under the agenda item entitled "Programme planning".

70. **Ms. Pliner** (Secretary of the Committee) explained that the Chairperson of the Second Committee would inform the Fifth Committee that the Second Committee had examined the relevant parts of the report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination in substantive terms, and had approved the recommendations contained in the report. If applicable, additional comments made by delegations would be included.

71. **Mr. Mally** (United States) said that his delegation had disassociated itself from the final report of the Committee for Programme and Coordination in September 2006 because of that Committee's continued inability to fulfil its mandate by reforming its working methods. His delegation was therefore not in a position to endorse the conclusions and recommendations contained in the report.

*The meeting rose at 12.35 p.m.*

United Nations A/C.2/61/SR.24

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## Second Committee

**Summary record of the 24th meeting**
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Thursday, 2 November 2006, at 10 a.m.

*Chairman*: Ms. Intelmann ..... (Estonia)

## Contents

Agenda item 51: Macroeconomic policy questions (*continued*)

(a) International trade and development (*continued*)

Agenda item 53: Sustainable development (*continued*)

(a) Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (*continued*)

(b) Follow-up to and implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States (*continued*)

(g) Report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on its ninth special session (*continued*)

Agenda item 54: Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) (*continued*)

Agenda item 55: Globalization and interdependence (*continued*)

(a) Globalization and interdependence (*continued*)

(d) Preventing and combating corrupt practices and transfer of assets of illicit origin and returning such assets, in particular to the countries of origin, consistent with the United Nations Convention against Corruption (*continued*)

Agenda item 58: Operational activities for development: operational activities for development of the United Nations system

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06-59804 (E)

*The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.*

**Agenda item 51: Macroeconomic policy questions** (*continued*)

**(a) International trade and development** (*continued*) (A/C.2/61/L.14)

*Draft resolution on international trade and development*

1. **Mr. Le Roux** (South Africa) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/61/L.14 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. The aim was to send a strong political message to the World Trade Organization (WTO) on the need to resume trade negotiations and conclude the Doha Round with the fullest development dimension. Given that the draft resolution contained no specific details regarding those negotiations, he hoped that a consensus would soon be reached.

**Agenda item 53: Sustainable development** (*continued*)

**(a) Implementation of Agenda 21, the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 and the outcomes of the World Summit on Sustainable Development** (*continued*) (A/C.2/61/L.16 and 21)

*Draft resolution on the International Year of Sanitation*

2. **Mr. Kodera** (Japan) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/61/L.16, which Monaco had joined in sponsoring. The lack of tangible progress on sanitation was a major stumbling block not only to sustainable development but also to health, poverty reduction, education and gender equality. More concerted global action was urgently needed in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and fulfil the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation. To that end, the United Nations Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation had put forward concrete policy recommendations in the Hashimoto Action Plan released earlier that year. One such recommendation concerned the International Year of Sanitation, which sought to raise awareness in order to mobilize the resources needed to make progress in that area.

*Draft resolution on the International Year of Forests, 2011*

3. **Ms. Zubčević** (Croatia), introducing draft resolution A/C.2/61/L.21, said that forests were crucial for eradicating poverty, reducing land and resource degradation, improving food security and ensuring access to safe drinking water and affordable energy. Models had been developed for obtaining economic benefits from forests, while preserving the environment and biodiversity. The sustainable management of forest ecosystems was therefore extremely important. The initiative to declare 2011 the International Year of Forests should be seen as part of efforts to achieve the goals and targets set at global conferences and to implement the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences. It was an additional effort to ensure forest sustainability and review the results achieved since Rio and Johannesburg and should be an opportunity to further strengthen multi-stakeholder dialogue, policy and programme coordination, and public participation.

**(b) Follow-up to and implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States** (*continued*) (A/C.2/61/L.18)

*Draft resolution on follow-up to and implementation of the Mauritius Strategy for the Further Implementation of the Programme of Action for the Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States*

4. **Ms. Zia** (South Africa) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/61/L.18 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

**(g) Report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on its ninth special session** (*continued*) (A/C.2/61/L.19)

*Draft resolution on the report of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme on its ninth special session*

5. **Ms. Zia** (South Africa) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/61/L.19 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

**Agenda item 54: Implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)** (*continued*) (A/C.2/61/L.17)

*Draft resolution on implementation of the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) and strengthening of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)*

6. **Ms. Zia** (South Africa) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/61/L.17 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China.

**Agenda item 55: Globalization and interdependence** (*continued*)

**(a) Globalization and interdependence** (*continued*) (A/C.2/61/L.15)

*Draft resolution on the role of the United Nations in promoting development in the context of globalization and interdependence*

7. **Mr. Le Roux** (South Africa) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/61/L.15 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. It was very important to target one particular aspect of globalization at a time. The focus at the current session was innovation, science and technology; the focus next year would be policy space in the context of globalization and interdependence.

**(d) Preventing and combating corrupt practices and transfer of assets of illicit origin and returning such assets, in particular to the countries of origin, consistent with the United Nations Convention against Corruption** (*continued*) (A/C.2/61/L.20)

*Draft resolution on preventing and combating corrupt practices and transfer of assets of illicit origin and returning such assets, in particular to the countries of origin, consistent with the United Nations Convention against Corruption*

8. **Mr. Le Roux** (South Africa) introduced draft resolution A/C.2/61/L.20 on behalf of the Group of 77 and China. Because the Convention had only recently entered into force and the first session of the Conference of the Parties had not yet taken place, the draft resolution was procedural in nature. However, it was not intended to be a precedent for future resolutions. Paragraph 5 requested the Secretary-General to submit to the General Assembly at its sixty-second session a report on the outcome of the first session of the Conference of the Parties, thereby ensuring that next year's resolution would be substantive in nature.

**Agenda item 58: Operational activities for development: operational activities for development of the United Nations system** (A/61/77-E/2006/59 and A/61/292)

9. **Mr. Seth** (Director, Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination) introduced the report of the Secretary-General on comprehensive statistical data on operational activities for development for 2004 (A/61/77-E/2006/59). The Economic and Social Council's consideration of the report and its resolution 2006/14 would add value to the Committee's deliberations. That sequential consideration was an example of how the Council/Assembly architecture could be further strengthened.

10. The Secretariat preparations currently under way for the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review to be undertaken by the General Assembly at its sixty-second session would be greatly enhanced by the analysis and information brought together in preparation for the much-anticipated report of the High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance and the environment. The report before the Committee would also provide a strong analytical basis for examining long-term funding trends and their implications. As requested in Economic and Social Council resolution 2005/7, the data in the report had been refined to better reflect funding for operational activities for development.

11. The report painted a mixed and complex picture of development cooperation activities and operational activities for development. Overall, funding for funds and programmes had risen in recent years, following a downward trend in the 1990s. The total value of contributions to the United Nations system for development cooperation activities in 2004 ($12.3 billion) represented a 17 per cent increase in nominal terms and a 7.6 per cent increase in real terms compared to 2003.

12. However, the picture was complicated by different movements in core and non-core funding. For

the first time in five years, contributions to core resources had fallen both in dollar terms and as a share of total contributions (only 41 per cent in 2004), though preliminary figures for 2005 indicated an overall increase in absolute terms. While non-core resources were important supplementary resources, the General Assembly had repeatedly highlighted the need to enhance regular or core contributions. Imbalance led to compromises. In his report on mandating and delivering: analysis and recommendations to facilitate the review of mandates (A/60/733), the Secretary-General had asked Member States to give serious consideration to the fact that duplication and overlaps could occur because of the nature of funding and the increasing role of non-core funding. Entities, over-dependent on non-core resources, had to orient their work on the promise of funding and the compromises that might entail.

13. The amount of total annual expenditure received by the least developed countries from 2000 to 2004 (around 40 per cent) was considerably higher than in previous years, reflecting growing international concern about the plight of the poorest countries. Among United Nations organizations, the World Food Programme (WFP) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had allocated the highest proportion of their expenditures to those countries in 2004.

14. A number of observations in the section on humanitarian assistance — namely, the very blurred distinction between humanitarian assistance and long-term development; the widely differing reporting practices among agencies; and the volatility of humanitarian contributions, the underfunding of humanitarian assistance and the fact that sectoral interventions sometimes called for action even before the worst aspects of crisis took hold — had important policy relevance.

15. On the issue of reporting, his Office was committed to working with the concerned United Nations agencies and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) to establish a common standardized humanitarian assistance reporting system, thereby giving effect to the relevant Economic and Social Council resolution.

16. While much scope remained for improving the accuracy and coverage of statistical information on the operational activities of the United Nations system, things were moving in the right direction. The report itself was a greater effort to harmonize data collection and analysis methods within the United Nations system, including with the conventions of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD).

17. **Ms. Heyzer** (Executive Director, United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM)), introducing the report on UNIFEM activities for 2005 transmitted by the Secretary-General (A/61/292), said that UNIFEM worked in four priority areas: reducing feminization of poverty and exclusion; promoting gender equality in democratic governance and post-conflict development; ending violence against women; and halting the spread of HIV/AIDS. It focused on encouraging United Nations partners, Governments, civil society and the private sector to form strong partnerships to advance gender equality and women's empowerment and achieve national development goals. UNIFEM programmes took a holistic approach, linking normative frameworks with institutional reform to bring concrete change on the ground. That included formulating and implementing laws and policies to promote gender equality and women's human rights; building institutional capacity to allocate sufficient resources and establish accountability mechanisms to ensure implementation; strengthening gender equality advocates to monitor progress and mobilize constituencies; and ending harmful practices and attitudes.

18. Those strategies operated at multiple levels and across sectors. Following its 2001 campaign to have gender-responsive budgeting in 45 countries by 2015, UNIFEM had supported programmes in 30 countries, where it worked across sectors, building relationships with ministries that affected women, such as health and education, and then scaling up results through partnerships with finance and planning ministries. In Morocco, for example, concrete budget measures were now spelled out in the gender budget statement that accompanied the national budget, while in India the economic survey that accompanied the presentation of the annual budget now included a gender budget analysis. In both cases, UNIFEM support had facilitated the development of a gender-responsive budgeting knowledge network, through which Governments and United Nations partners obtained up-to-date knowledge and technical support.

19. Concrete results could also be seen in its two-year programme with the United Nations Development Fund (UNDP) to showcase holistic strategies for mainstreaming a gender perspective in Millennium Development Goal processes, including through poverty dialogues, multi-stakeholder meetings and the development of gender-responsive indicators. Three pilot countries had "engendered" their Millennium Development Goal reports, one had started Millennium Development Goal planning at the district level, and all five had increased their use of analysis and data in reporting and monitoring. Working through the gender theme groups in United Nations country teams, the programme had influenced national planning frameworks in two countries, the poverty reduction strategy paper process in another, and the national strategic development plan in yet another.

20. The issue was not lack of good practices or effective strategies, but rather how to implement strategies on a scale large enough to turn the tide for gender equality and women's human rights and achieve national development goals. The review of the implementation of the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review provided an opportunity to develop concrete recommendations to increase strategy- and practice-sharing among agencies on the ground, monitoring and accountability mechanisms, and sustained partnerships and resources, particularly at the country level.

21. After working hard to secure frameworks and mechanisms, the United Nations must take up the far more difficult task of implementing strategies and practices and helping countries meet all international development goals. Three priorities needed to be addressed.

22. First, there was a need to strengthen a coherent and integrated approach across the United Nations system. As the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review resolution on gender had recognized, development effectiveness required gender equality to be addressed coherently throughout the United Nations system. In response, the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) Task Team on Gender Equality, which was chaired by UNIFEM, coordinated action among its 16 member agencies to mainstream gender equality and women's empowerment and ensure that they were incorporated into the tools and guidance given by UNDG to United Nations country teams. The Task Team had recommended bringing together good practices in each organization to raise the bar on gender equality accountability across the system. It also proposed two actions to help United Nations country teams move from improved analysis to more coherent implementation and accountability: an "Accounting for Gender Equality" scorecard to assess their performance and identify gaps and progress across the whole system; and an "Action Learning" process to help Governments and civil society move forward on gender equality and women's empowerment.

23. Second, gender equality needed to be strengthened in national development strategies. Gender equality action plans were in place in over 120 countries, while laws and action plans to end violence against women had been adopted in 89 countries. What was needed was an implementation strategy. UNIFEM was helping Governments adopt harmonized gender equality indicators; strengthening capacity among stakeholders to incorporate harmonized indicators into national development planning and poverty reduction strategies; mobilizing, together with the European Union, a critical mass of change agents committed to a more gender-equitable society, including Government leaders and international and regional organizations. In so doing, it was working to ensure that women's voices and perspectives were brought into the development process; that gender equality principles and strategies were incorporated into all coordination mechanisms; and that national action plans on gender equality and violence against women were integrated into national development planning and strategies.

24. Third, there was a need to strengthen monitoring and accountability by women on the ground. For work on gender equality and social justice, accountability meant provision of sufficient resources for implementation and community-level participation in defining targets and tracking progress. That also helped grass-roots and women's organizations perform a watchdog function, thereby bringing underrepresented and excluded groups into the development process.

25. The gender equality architecture needed to be strengthened at the global and country levels and the United Nations system as a whole needed to respond to the new opportunities for, and current threats to, gender quality and women's human rights. A consolidated gender entity would make the much needed difference to the extent that it had sufficient presence and authority with United Nations country teams and could

inspire and mobilize partnerships and agents for change. It must be connected to a constituency at the country level, to ensure that the system was responsive to women's realities, and be able to tackle emerging issues and push the system to tackle them too.

26. **Mr. Abreha** (Ethiopia) noted the rise in the share of resources allocated to the least developed countries, which was in congruence with the Millennium Declaration, the Millennium Development Goals and the Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries for the Decade 2001-2010. He expressed particular appreciation to WFP and UNICEF for their efforts in that regard.

27. However, 40 per cent was much lower than what had been agreed in the respective funds and programmes. That figure apparently related to total core and non-core resources. He would be interested to know why the least developed countries received a lower percentage and how resources could increasingly be channelled from non-core resources to the least developed countries.

28. **Mr. Seth** (Director, Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination) said that the figures provided in the report (table 9, p. 18) reflected the percentage of total expenditure — in other words, both core and non-core resources — received by the least developed countries. He wished to qualify his earlier comments by pointing out that the data under consideration covered the period up to 2004. Subsequent changes would be reflected in greater detail in the next report.

29. **Mr. Gass** (Switzerland) asked whether it would be feasible to bridge the current 18-month lag in data and provide data including the previous year.

30. **Mr. Seth** (Director, Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination) said that his Office wanted to move in that direction. However, it was not enough for data to be available; they also had to be presented in an analytically useful format. In other words, there was no point preparing a table if data were available for only some of the components. Only comprehensive data that were part of a comparative framework could be used by the Committee to conduct an analysis and draw conclusions. That said, it was hoped that the next report would contain updated information in such a format.

31. **Mr. Chowdhury** (Under-Secretary-General and High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States) said that the special involvement and contribution of the United Nations Resident Coordinators for the 50 least developed countries had been underscored during the five-year review of the Brussels Programme. Successful implementation of the Programme during the remaining five years would require greater engagement of the Resident Coordinators at the country level.

32. There was a need to increase the funding of the operational and development cooperation activities of the United Nations system. Least developed countries were all the more concerned at the paucity of core resources because they were badly equipped to attract non-core supplementary development funding. Constraints resulting from stagnant core resources affected the least developed countries disproportionately and all United Nations development partners were therefore urged to steadily increase their resource allocations to those countries.

33. He had encouraged the establishment of national mechanisms and focal points to enhance the least developed countries' ownership of the Brussels Programme as well as their capacity to implement it at the country level. However, national implementation efforts needed to be coordinated with the relevant United Nations system organizations.

34. As noted in the Brussels Programme, one cross-cutting priority was the achievement of gender parity in all aspects of society, including social and economic development. In that regard, the High Representative commended the efforts of UNIFEM to empower women to make a greater contribution to development.

35. **The Chairperson** invited the Committee to engage in a general discussion on the item.

36. **Mr. Le Roux** (South Africa), speaking on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, said that operational activities for development were dependent on adequate, sustainable and predictable funding. As highlighted in the Secretary-General's report (A/61/77-E/2006/59), there was a need to further refine data in reports to better reflect funding for operational activities for development, including a better distinction between contributions made for humanitarian assistance and for long-term development cooperation and expenditures and actual contributions as received and channelled through United Nations

funds, programmes and specialized agencies and the United Nations Secretariat.

37. Operational activities for development needed to be assessed on the basis of their impact on recipient countries with respect to building capacity to achieve poverty and hunger eradication, sustained economic growth and sustainable development. Developing countries should receive the necessary support to develop their national capacities in order to achieve their national development plans as well as the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

38. The Group of 77 and China was looking forward to future Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review discussions on ways to further improve the coherence and effectiveness of the operational activities for development of the United Nations system and strengthen South-South cooperation. The discussions would also provide an opportunity to review steps taken by the United Nations development system to ensure country ownership of operational activities.

39. **Ms. Fernández** (Finland), speaking on behalf of the European Union, the acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania; the candidate countries Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Turkey; the stabilization and association process countries Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia; and, in addition, Moldova, said that the comprehensive statistical data on operational activities for development for 2004 contained in the Secretary-General's report (A/61/77-E/2006/59) had been refined to better differentiate between long-term development and humanitarian funding. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) was encouraged to continue working to establish a common standardized humanitarian assistance reporting system that provided estimations on a regular basis. It was also important that DESA should work closely with all United Nations organizations to make its data more representative and transparent, as the data were needed to plan the work of the United Nations system at the country level.

40. The European Union was committed to working for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, while recognizing that they could be reached only if women and men were able to play an equal part in all areas of life. Gender mainstreaming and women's empowerment needed to be analysed and addressed in all the operational activities of the United Nations and in that respect, the European Union commended the achievements of the Inter-Agency Network on Women and Gender Equality and UNIFEM during the review period.

41. The European Union also remained committed to the implementation of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. Given that gender equality had largely been absent from the agenda-setting process in the new aid modalities, the European Union gave its full support to UNIFEM's strategy on mainstreaming gender equality into aid effectiveness.

42. **Mr. Tarragô** (Brazil), speaking on behalf of MERCOSUR, said that the Secretary-General's report on comprehensive statistical data on operational activities (A/61/77-E/2006/59) showed some improvement in the volume and quality of the information conveyed to Member States. It was particularly important that a distinction had been made between contributions for humanitarian assistance and contributions for long-term development cooperation and that the report had been refined and standardized to harmonize with the conventions of the OECD Development Assistance Committee.

43. With respect to the data on contributions and expenditures, it had been noted with concern that the contributions to UNDP and WFP were insufficient. MERCOSUR was particularly concerned at the reduction of their core resources between 2000 and 2004. It was also disturbing that the actual increase in expenditures between 2000 and 2004 had exceeded both the actual increase in contributions to total multilateral ODA and the actual increase in contributions to the United Nations system only. Such an unbalanced financial structure could only lead to a shortage in funding.

44. The Secretary-General's report had been broadened to include data on humanitarian assistance by United Nations organizations. Given that humanitarian assistance accounted for 27 per cent of total expenditures in 2004 and that the largest share of expenditures had been made by just two agencies, namely UNDP and WFP, it was possible that other vulnerable areas in the developing countries were being neglected.

45. Finally, it should be noted that contributions and expenditures were part of the whole architecture of international finance for development. They therefore

needed to be examined from other angles such as adequacy in volume, stability, effectiveness and their catalytic role in fostering harmonization among development partners.

46. **Mr. Piminov** (Russian Federation) welcomed the report in document A/61/77-E/2006/59 on the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of operational activities for development. His delegation was not opposed to a standardized reporting system on humanitarian assistance, which would improve the quality of documentation and analysis within the Secretariat. The report also confirmed that a broader donor base was required for United Nations programmes and funds. Additional funding should be provided on a voluntary, and above all an unconditional, basis. His Government had taken practical steps in that regard by doubling its voluntary contributions in 2006. UNIFEM appeared to be an important independent component of the United Nations system that was making a tangible contribution, including in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States.

47. Extending and improving operational activities for development should be a priority. The principles that governed those activities and their funding — universality, objectivity, neutrality, multilateralism and their voluntary nature — guaranteed that they would be effective. In terms of reform, his delegation wished to emphasize once again that General Assembly resolution 59/250 was the only legitimate basis for further reforms of operational activities. The Triennial Review to be conducted in 2007 should take a measured and pragmatic approach to ensure consistency and take into account the positions of all stakeholders. Existing agreements had to be the starting point for further action.

48. It should also be recalled that the Economic and Social Council had recently reaffirmed that the "division of labour" between the General Assembly, the Council and operational agencies was one of the best features of the system's three-tiered architecture. Reform should not, therefore, be an end in itself. It should be aimed at greater effectiveness in each specific country, and not merely at greater overall cost efficiency. Any proposed innovation must be accompanied by a detailed comparison between the additional costs entailed and potential savings. Reforms should also be predicated on flexibility so that operational activities responded to the specific circumstances of different countries.

49. **Ms. Blum** (Colombia) said that her delegation welcomed the fact that the Secretary-General's report had provided disaggregated statistical data on the financing of operational activities for development, thereby allowing a clear differentiation between contributions for long-term development cooperation and contributions for humanitarian assistance.

50. The implementation of operational activities required adequate financial resources, the transfer of technology and the creation of national capacity. By focusing on factors that promoted long-term development, developing countries could reduce their vulnerability to distortions, external imbalances, natural disasters and environmental deterioration. In that regard, Colombia was concerned that only 20 per cent of the contributions for operational activities for development had been allocated to long-term development components.

51. In 2004, the Government of Colombia had developed an international cooperation strategy for 2006-2010 based on the Millennium Development Goals and the objectives of its national development plan. Priorities included the fight against the global drug problem, environmental protection, reconciliation and governance, and achievement of the Goals. The strategy recognized the need for new approaches to enable middle-income countries such as Colombia to access international cooperation resources. Colombia hoped that the international community would renew its offers of cooperation to strengthen the rule of law, the promotion of human rights, regional development and humanitarian assistance.

52. **Mr. Benfreha** (Algeria) described the operational activities for development of the United Nations system as essential vectors for development at national and regional levels. The objective of United Nations reform should be to amplify such activities in order to help the developing countries in their efforts to achieve the internationally agreed development goals. To that end, the effectiveness of operational activities for development could be assessed only through the implementation and follow-up of the approved programmes, examining the results actually achieved.

53. There was a need too for greater refinement in the statistical data in order to make a clearer distinction between contributions for development and for humanitarian assistance. Algeria was interested in particular in how to make operational activities for

development more competitive, and counted on the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review to give the desired results of better implementation.

54. The funding of operational activities for development needed to be neutral, voluntary and predictable. Financing remained an acute problem, even if there had been some recent increases in resources. The report of the Secretary-General (A/61/77-E/2006/59) valued the contributions received for development cooperation activities at $12.3 billion for 2004, representing an increase of 7.6 per cent in real terms. That increase should be consolidated by a rise in contributions paid to the United Nations system, as well as by suitable measures to bring about the desired leverage effect in terms of sustainable development.

55. Operational activities for development should provide consistent and well-coordinated support to the developing countries' national strategies. Strengthening their national capacities in line with their own priorities and needs should remain the primary objective of such activities.

56. Finally, better coordination of the operational activities of the United Nations agencies responsible for development issues would be needed to ensure optimum implementation of approved projects. The United Nations system, facing management problems because of overlapping responsibilities, needed more cohesion in order to achieve greater effectiveness on the ground.

57. Like other developing countries, Algeria participated in South-South cooperation by making voluntary contributions to the relevant bodies. Such cooperation, which was considered as the indicator of the effectiveness of development, was assuming importance within the United Nations system.

58. **Mr. Llanio Gonzalez** (Cuba) said that, over five years after the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, the so-called Agenda for Development was still far from being effectively implemented, owing to the enormous obstacles and challenges posed by the neoliberal globalization process. Numerous sources provided evidence of the critical economic and social situation currently facing the world, characterized by the spread and increase of hunger and poverty, the intensification of armed conflicts, environmental degradation and the propagation of diseases such as AIDS, threatening the very existence of several countries.

59. It was reported, for example, that the poorest 40 per cent of the world population lived on less than 2 dollars a day and that every year 11 million children died from preventable diseases. In addition, there were 852 million people suffering from hunger and 876 million illiterate adults.

60. The activities of the United Nations funds, programmes and agencies in each country thus had a special significance. Their field work made them uniquely aware of and uniquely qualified to deal with the real needs of developing countries and it was thus crucially important to preserve their valuable contribution. Cuba favoured retaining the separate identity of each of them, with their specific mandates and functions, rejecting the idea of a possible "merger", but was also in favour of greater coordination and coherence among them in order to maximize the effectiveness of their work. Such coordination, however, did not necessarily imply common management frameworks or field-level programming, or any loss of individual identities.

61. Since there were no "one-size-fits-all" development patterns, operational activities should respond to the national strategies and development priorities of each country. In that regard, Cuba remained concerned about the growing priority being given within UNDP to implementation of activities not directly linked to economic and social development. Cuba also noted with concern the trend over recent years towards an increase in non-core resources for emergencies and thematic funds of interest to the donors, as compared to an increasingly insufficient volume of core resources. That imbalance could turn funds and programmes into relief agencies. There was no doubt about the importance of agencies' support for humanitarian assistance, to be provided with the consent of the affected country and at its request. However, the true role of the agencies, funds and programmes was to foster long-term development. Donor countries must provide the indispensable core resources for the operational activities, on an ongoing and predictable basis. Non-core resources could not by any means be a substitute for core resources.

62. Among the main areas in need of resources and assistance was South-South cooperation, conceived as a complement to the North-South cooperation and not

as a substitute for it. The United Nations agencies, funds and programmes should implement initiatives to strengthen such cooperation, incorporating that objective into their operational activities, always with respect for established principles and procedures, and without any negative impact on the scarce resources currently devoted to operational activities. In particular, the UNDP Special Unit for South-South Cooperation should play a more active role in promoting greater integration of South-South cooperation within the other bodies of the United Nations system.

63. The principles of national security, territorial integrity and national unity of States, in accordance with the United Nations Charter, should continue to guide operational activities anywhere in the world.

64. **Mr. Chowdhury** (Bangladesh) said that development was increasingly seen as multidimensional, encompassing economic, social and environmental aspects. The United Nations must address those aspects in a comprehensive manner. The functions and activities of the individual United Nations bodies were varied, but they had a common purpose, and together they could make the system more cohesive. Coordination among all entities was essential for maximizing each one's distinct comparative advantage, and for enabling the United Nations system as a whole to respond effectively to current demands. Complex rules and procedures must be streamlined; programmatic coherence could reduce duplication and transaction costs, releasing more resources for operational activities. Efforts to harmonize activities should be driven by criteria and procedures set by the whole United Nations membership.

65. Proper intergovernmental monitoring and evaluation of United Nations activities would enhance their effectiveness. Agencies must be held accountable for their performance, which would enhance programme results. Greater efficiency of country teams could best be achieved if their operational activities and contribution to national priorities were evaluated by the host Governments. Effective performance of the resident coordinator system required greater financial, organizational and technical support. In order for United Nations activities at the country level to be coherent with national development strategies, the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) must reflect national priorities.

66. The objective of system-wide coherence should not be driven merely by the principle of assimilation and cost-cutting. Rather, it should be guided by reality and pragmatism. The United Nations should avoid shifting resources from development to other activities which were donor-driven and not in line with the priorities of developing countries. The system-wide coherence process should enhance intergovernmental oversight and coordination, including through strengthening of the role of the Economic and Social Council.

67. The credibility and effectiveness of the United Nations development system depended on a stable and predictable resource base. There must be a better balance between core and non-core contributions, as well as closer scrutiny of spending. The current insufficiency of core resources for both administration and programme development represented the single greatest constraint on the performance of development entities. Lack of resources had changed the dynamics of the demand-driven approach of the United Nations, impeding the adoption of long-term strategic decisions, something that was contrary to the spirit of the Millennium Declaration. However, Bangladesh did wish to thank those donors who had fulfilled their pledges.

68. The new funding options and modalities in the report (A/61/77-E/2006/59) warranted careful consideration. The idea of assessed contributions by the donors to United Nations country teams merited serious consideration. There was still room for trimming the overhead costs of the United Nations without significantly changing the basic structure.

69. Multilateral assistance should not be tied to any political conditionality and each country must enjoy the necessary space for its own policy formulation. Bangladesh looked forward to the work of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence, and to the Panel's development, in line with its mandate, of a comprehensive set of recommendations to guide the United Nations to a new era in which the Organization could effectively leverage its unique legitimacy and role in realizing the Millennium Development Goals.

70. **Mr. Sinha** (India) said that the report on comprehensive statistical data on operational activities for development for 2004 (A/61/77-E/2006/59) provided a good picture of the distinction between

contributions made for humanitarian assistance and those for long-term development cooperation.

71. The report revealed that, while yearly contributions for development cooperation had risen steadily over the past five years, the pattern for core resources had not been so favourable. It referred to UNICEF's 2004 contributions report, which stated that, while it highly valued other resource contributions, UNICEF's comparative advantage would be compromised if the imbalance between regular resources and other resources continued. While core and other contributions had been more or less in balance between 2000 and 2003, the share of core resources had fallen substantially in 2004, amounting to no more than 70 per cent of other resources. Even the nominal dollar amount of core resources had fallen for the first time. Core resources were the foundation of country cooperation programmes and were necessary for UNICEF and similar organizations to perform core functions at the optimal level and to contribute to achievement of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. While recognizing the value of the increase in non-core resources, the General Assembly had repeatedly highlighted the need to enhance the core contributions to the United Nations development system. Its resolution 59/250 acknowledged in paragraph 20 that other resources were "not a substitute for core resources".

72. India would stress the need for adequate core funding during the 2007 discussion of the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review. It believed that the United Nations system's operational activities for development should be assessed on the basis of the contribution they made to developing countries' efforts to pursue their national development plans and priorities. Since the strength of the United Nations system lay in its legitimacy as a neutral, objective and trusted partner for both recipient and donor countries, those characteristics should be strengthened so that the Organization's operational activities for development could better support developing countries' long-term development efforts.

73. The report presented and analysed data on humanitarian contributions and expenditures for the first time. India agreed that countries in need required both humanitarian and development assistance, and that in many cases humanitarian assistance was an essential component in the process of transition from relief to development. The international community needed to maintain its interest and funding for the reconstruction phase of humanitarian emergencies, long after the media had moved on to new stories. General Assembly resolution 59/250 had recommended that planning for the transition to development should be started right at the beginning of the relief phase.

74. The report on the activities of the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM) (A/61/292) provided an overview of its programmes and activities. Despite being a small agency, UNIFEM had been able to make a contribution in several areas in a large number of countries. However, the outcomes of UNIFEM's work were dependent on the contributions of the national partners in Government and non-governmental organizations.

75. The report cited a number of projects in India in which UNIFEM was involved. An important one was the partnership between UNIFEM and the Indian Railways to incorporate gender-responsive policies and practices related to HIV/AIDS. The report described that project as a "recognized model of public-sector intervention" and added that, in partnership with UNIFEM and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), representatives of the Chinese Railways had visited the programme to look into possible replication.

76. India congratulated UNIFEM on attaining a record total income of $57.6 million in 2005 and for exceeding its multi-year funding framework target of $43.4 million. However, the core contributions of $22 million fell below the target of $25.4 million. India emphasized the importance of enhanced core funding to help UNIFEM continue its mandated activities.

77. **Mr. Petranto** (Indonesia) said that, with the launch of the High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence early in 2006, the efforts of the United Nations system to implement General Assembly resolution 59/250 were taking place in a favourable policy context, with improvements being pursued in all areas of operational activities. In response to the evolving work environment, and in accordance with the provisions of the 2005 World Summit Outcome, including the follow-up resolution 60/265, the United Nations system had adopted various initiatives to ensure that operational activities were aligned with national development frameworks. The concept "*one team, one leader and one programme*" was influencing policies and practical decisions at the country level. In addition, national capacity-building was being

undertaken to facilitate the long-term sustainability of programmes. Those measures would create momentum in recipient countries to achieve their development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

78. Excessively earmarked funding would become unnecessary if national development priorities determined areas of cooperation between recipient and donor countries. There would also be accelerated progress in that area if the agencies in the United Nations system were to harmonize and simplify the relevant rules and procedures of their operational activities. That would promote shared handling of resources, coherent decision-making and streamlined management of activities. There should be thorough joint evaluations of operational activities.

79. However, the availability of adequate resources on a continuous and predictable basis was critical for success. A cause for concern therefore was the stunted growth of the core resources that underpinned operational activities, in comparison with supplementary funding.

80. The value of South-South cooperation, as a means of generating development resources and building capacity within developing countries, should not be overlooked but such cooperation must be mainstreamed into the operational activities of the United Nations system as part of the process of triangular cooperation involving donors. Further, natural and man-made disasters had serious implications for operational activities, causing funds to be re-routed to rehabilitation and reconstruction activities. Once disasters occurred, therefore, they had to be factored into the development process as part of its costs. Consequently, the inclusion of data on humanitarian assistance contributions and expenditures in the Secretary General's report (A/61/77-E/2006/59) was a welcome development. In the future, the data should be more detailed and should serve as the basis of a common standardized humanitarian assistance reporting system, with the distinction between humanitarian and regular activities always being maintained.

81. **Mr. Liu** Zhenmin (China) said that, without adequate, steadily increasing and predictable core resources, United Nations operational activities could not effectively help the recipient countries implement their national development strategies. Since the adoption of the Monterrey Consensus, the international community had made extensive efforts to meet those commitments and the total resources of the United Nations development system had in fact seen some increases in recent years. However, the increases had been mainly in non-core resources. The increasing dependency of certain programmes and funds on non-core resources posed a challenge to the United Nations development system's basic principles of universality, neutrality and multilateralism. Developed countries should increase their contributions to core resources, and achieve the target of allocating 0.7 per cent of their GNP as official development assistance, with 0.15 to 0.20 per cent going to the least developed countries. China supported the establishment of timetables and review mechanisms for the implementation of those goals.

82. To the extent of its ability, China made yearly contributions to the core resources of development programmes, funds and agencies. It was China's hope that the United Nations development system would adopt comprehensive and integrated measures to intensify fund-raising efforts without imposing extra burdens on the developing countries.

83. Regular comprehensive reviews of operational activities for development were essential. Since 2005, in its effort to implement the follow-up to the World Summit and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the United Nations development system had carried out laudable reforms with a view to reducing administrative costs and enhancing efficiency. In preparation for the 2007 Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review, China was in favour of an early comprehensive assessment of the contribution of the United Nations operational activities to recipient countries' efforts to reduce poverty and achieve sustainable social and economic development. Such an assessment would enable the United Nations development system to sum up experiences and lessons, identify underperforming areas and provide better guidance to its future work.

84. Reforming the United Nations operational activities for development and improving their quality and efficiency should result in increased capacity to meet the various needs of the recipient countries in an integrated and flexible way. Therefore, it should not be rigidly confined to certain specific areas. Operational activities in the field should take full account of the recipient countries' conditions and needs and ensure the participation and consent of their Governments,

rather than attempting to use the same model in all cases. In trying to strengthen the Resident Coordinator system, a balance between authority and responsibility should be achieved, reinforcing accountability while granting greater power. Only in that way could the recipient countries benefit to the maximum from programme cooperation. China was looking forward to constructive discussions with other Member States on concrete reform plans once the Secretary General's High-level Panel on System-wide Coherence had submitted its report.

85. Ultimately, the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals depended on the capacities of the developing countries themselves. Capacity-building in those countries was therefore the core of development and a long process that should be incorporated into the mainstream operations of the United Nations development system. The United Nations development system should actively explore new ideas for promoting South-South cooperation, intensifying efforts to consolidate current resources and opening up more financing channels. China hoped that the developed countries would assist by contributing to funds dedicated to economic and technological cooperation among developing countries such as the United Nations Fund for South-South Cooperation and the Perez-Guerrero Trust Fund for Economic and Technical Cooperation among Developing Countries.

86. Over the years China had carried out fruitful economic and technological cooperation with other developing countries on an extensive scale, and had provided them with a certain amount of economic and technological assistance, within its own capabilities. All that had been done on the basis of full respect for the need and ownership of the countries concerned. At the 2005 World Summit, President Hu Jintao had announced a series of new measures to help other developing countries accelerate their development, covering debt relief, preferential treatment in trade, human resources training, and cooperation in the field of public health.

87. **Mr. Gass** (Switzerland) said that the statistical compendium contained in the report on operational activities (A/61/77-E/2006/69) was especially useful in outlining the financing of international development activities. UNDG funds and programmes were doing promising work on harmonized evaluation systems, unified accounting standards and joint programming, but were hampered by administrative delays and uneven implementation. That signalled a serious human resource problem that should be given greater attention by fund and programme directors.

88. Specialized agencies were also showing positive signs of cooperation for development. They had moved quickly to implement General Assembly resolution 59/250 on the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review, despite the financing challenges they faced. Nevertheless, there was still much work to be done and he encouraged stakeholders to intensify their efforts.

89. His delegation was especially heartened that Member States were applying the principle of the division of labour between the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council. The Council had fulfilled expectations in implementing resolution 59/250, using for that purpose a matrix designed jointly by UNDG and DESA that would allow stakeholders to track the implementation process, and had defined a satisfactory set of tasks for the subsequent triennial review.

90. Switzerland looked forward to reading the report of the High-level Panel on United Nations System-wide Coherence and hoped that Member States would study and discuss it, since it might offer new ideas for improving the efficiency and impact of United Nations operations.

91. **Mr. Wagle** (Nepal) said that the effectiveness of operational activities lay in their responsiveness to the development needs of recipient countries. Improved data and statistical practices would lead to better coordination of development efforts and greater accountability and would be useful in preparing for the upcoming Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review.

92. Every country was responsible for its own development, but international support from development partners was also essential: institutional capacities, infrastructure, technology and financial resources were all needed to manage development. In order to mobilize development resources effectively, capacity-building was required for national, community and private-sector stakeholders. In that respect, the least developed countries deserved special attention from the international community and increased financial and technical support in health, education, agriculture and rural infrastructure.

93. His delegation appreciated the follow-up given by United Nations agencies to development summit

outcomes and the support they had provided through development programmes and humanitarian operations. The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in particular should play a greater role in the follow-up to population development activities. UNIFEM, for its part, had done important work on gender mainstreaming and the empowerment of women.

94. Trade was crucial to economic growth and sustainable development, and the international community had realized that it was necessary to integrate the least developed countries into the multilateral trading system. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) played a crucial role in that process through technical cooperation and capacity-building. The Aid for Trade Initiative should be made operational and the Common Fund for Commodities strengthened.

95. The core resources of the United Nations agencies for operational activities should be increased in a sustained and predictable manner. The global partnership for development could be strengthened through effective assistance to the developing and least developed countries aimed at implementing their national development strategies. Collaborative efforts to evaluate operational activities and thus respond to evolving development needs would ensure better results.

96. **Mr. Tyrkus** (Ukraine), speaking on behalf of the member States of the Organization for Democracy and Economic Development, namely Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan and Moldova (GUAM), said that the millennium review summit had made progress across a broad sustainable development agenda. Improved management and coordination of operational activities was essential to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, which made the Triennial Comprehensive Policy Review of those activities all the more important.

97. Inter-agency and field-level coordination appeared to be progressing well. Valuable work had been done to improve the system of Resident Coordinators and align country operations with the Millennium Declaration. It was also encouraging that UNDG had stepped up its efforts to streamline programming procedures. Nevertheless, simpler procedures should be sought in order to improve services to recipient countries and enhance their capacity to manage development projects.

98. Strategic planning instruments such as the common country assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) had been successful in providing an integrated approach to national priorities and linking them with the programme activities of United Nations agencies. However, greater attention should have been focused on the economic content of those mechanisms. To achieve that, greater strategic collaboration should be developed between United Nations agencies, the Bretton Woods institutions and the regional commissions. The activities of those institutions could also be strengthened through coordination of policy and programming.

99. Funding for operational development activities should be increased substantially on a predictable, continuous and assured basis. A better balance was also needed, with funding consisting primarily of core resources. Contributions to the core resources of operational agencies should remain voluntary. In addition, multi-year funding frameworks should be used to link resource mobilization and performance by strengthening the results-based management of those agencies.

100. The GUAM States supported the activities of UNIFEM in gendering national policies and legislation and, more generally, reaffirmed their commitment to further strengthening the operational activities of the organizations in the United Nations system.

101. **Mr. Chidumo** (Mozambique) said that the report in document A/61/77-E/2006/59 was a fundamental instrument for planning the response of the United Nations to the needs of developing countries. His delegation concurred that data and statistical practices should be standardized in order to improve the quality of data on operational activities. The data analysis contained in the report was crucial to ensuring a more coherent approach to development and humanitarian assistance.

102. The credibility and effectiveness of the operational activities of the United Nations system depended on the universal, voluntary nature of contributions and on their predictability and adequacy in responding to the development needs of individual countries. Unfortunately, the current volume and quality of aid fell short of the expectations of recipient countries. Inadequate financing, complex managerial structures and lack of coherence in policy and

operational activities kept the United Nations system from playing a larger role in helping nations achieve internationally agreed development goals. Fundamental changes were therefore needed to capitalize on the pledge made in the 2005 World Summit Outcome to make the United Nations system more effective and accountable.

103. His delegation believed in the vital importance of the United Nations as the centre of a multilateral system. As a major recipient of assistance in sub-Saharan Africa, Mozambique benefited from strong cooperation within the context of UNDAF in support of the development priorities set by his Government. Much more could be done, however, if organizational and funding obstacles were removed. A more coherent and integrated approach, together with the inclusion of regional commissions in the reform process, would ensure that United Nations operational activities matched the development needs of recipient countries and played a stronger role in development. In addition, a further level of coordination was required between the United Nations system and the Bretton Woods institutions to maximize the effectiveness of financial and technical assistance coming from inside and outside the United Nations system.

104. His delegation pledged its support for the reform process aimed at creating a United Nations system that could deliver more to the international development agenda and thus respond to the growing needs of people worldwide.

*The meeting rose at 12.50 p.m.*